

AN AMERICAN REFUGEE CRISIS

ELIZABETH HOLTZMAN

US HEATS UP THE COLD WAR

STEPHEN F. COHEN

THE Nation.

150

FEBRUARY 29, 2016

RACE RECKONING & REDEMPTION

Can the Democratic Party chart a new racial politics?

Michelle Alexander

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Ian Haney-López

The Nation.

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On February 9, America felt the earth move. It wasn't just that, for the first time in our nation's history, a socialist candidate actually won a presidential primary (the first Jew, too, for that matter). It was also the scale of that victory. Behind by double digits in the summer, Senator Bernie Sanders

took on the most formidable machine in modern American politics and won the New Hampshire Democratic primary by more than 21 points.

And while Hillary Clinton and the corporate media began discounting the state's significance from the moment Sanders began to lead, New Hampshire was in no sense a state that Clinton's campaign wrote off. The state that made Bill Clinton the "Comeback Kid"—and where Hillary's own wounded candidacy got its second wind in 2008—was too important to her for that. Clinton visited New Hampshire nearly two dozen times—fewer than her visits to Iowa, but many more than any other state. Far from conceding victory and concentrating her resources elsewhere, Clinton outspent Sanders on radio and TV, according to Kantar Media's CMAG ad tracker. Her campaign also flooded the zone with surrogates, rounding up elected officials from Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont to backstop Hillary, Chelsea, and Bill—whose ill-tempered tirade in Milford, New Hampshire, sounded more like wounded entitlement than spousal support.

Taking the stage in the Concord High School gymnasium to an ecstatic crowd warmed up by a playlist ranging from Talking Heads ("Burning Down the House") to Bruno Mars ("Uptown Funk"), Sanders was in no mood to deny his supporters the significance of their victory. "We have sent a message that will echo from Wall Street to Washington, from Maine to California," he told them. "Because we harnessed the energy and the excitement that the Democratic Party will need to succeed in November."

Exit polls revealed that Sanders won among every demographic group in the state except senior citizens and voters earning more than \$200,000 a year. His support was strong among young voters,

liberals, rural voters, urban voters, white men, and even women. His lead among working-class voters was particularly pronounced—a trend suggested by last week's results in Iowa, and a stunning reversal of fortune for Clinton, who, in the 2008 election, was seen as the standard bearer for lower-income whites (even more so than Barack Obama was). Asked "Who do you think is honest and trustworthy?" 95 percent of Sanders voters—and, interestingly, 3 percent of Clinton voters—replied: "Only Sanders."

New Hampshire also reset the bar for a convincing victory. If the candidate who was dismissed as quixotic from the start can pull off not just a "virtual tie" (as in Iowa) but a 21-point win, can Clinton afford to do any less in Nevada and South Carolina? Especially when the Republican results in New Hampshire mean there is still no "mainstream" challenger to Donald Trump. Sanders, who seemed determined to make the most of his access to the national media on election night, delivered a long victory speech in Concord. But there was no doubting the sincerity—or the urgency—in his voice when, addressing his own supporters as well as Clinton's, he warned: "I also hope that we all remember... that we will need to come together in a few months and unite this party—and this nation—because the right-wing Republicans we oppose must not be allowed to gain the presidency."

For the Democrats, New Hampshire marks not an end but a beginning. With actual vote totals available for the first time, it's clear that this is now a race between two candidates who share a commitment to many policy goals that are anathema to their GOP opponents: the protection of a woman's right to control her own fertility, increasing access to higher education, ending the epidemic of police

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92%

Black voters who correctly identified Hillary Clinton in an August 2015 poll

33%

Black voters who correctly identified Bernie Sanders in the same poll

21%

Black and Latino voters who supported Sanders as of January 2016

71%

Black and Latino voters who supported Clinton in the same poll

88%

Average support for Democratic presidential and congressional candidates among black voters since 1980

“He has a decades-long track record of fighting for the reforms that he is proposing.”

Actor Danny Glover, endorsing Bernie Sanders in The Huffington Post

violence against African Americans, reining in the corrupting influence of big money in politics, stopping the scourge of gun violence, moving America and the world away from a fossil-fuel economy. At the same time, it is also a debate between two widely divergent views—not just about the best means to achieve those shared goals, but also about the very boundaries of political possibility. Clinton has essentially, and successfully, defined herself as a continuity Democrat, arguing that incremental improvement is all we can hope for. Sanders challenges his supporters to “think big” and believes that in order to bring about change on the scale needed to make a real difference in people’s lives, it will require overturning the prevailing economic and political order—a grassroots electoral “revolution.”

This is not a disagreement that can—or should—be settled hastily. The stakes are too high for that. We hope that the coming months will see not just more debates, but more listening and less dismissing. If Clinton is going to recover, she’ll need to start winning the argument on policy, not electability. Because as her panicked media cheerleaders now surely realize, electability is an argument that can cut both ways.

Heating the Cold War

Obama escalates confrontation with Russia.

The Obama administration has just recklessly escalated its military confrontation with Russia. The Pentagon’s announcement that it will more than quadruple military spending on the US-NATO forces in countries on or near Russia’s borders pushes the new Cold War toward actual war—possibly even a nuclear one.

The move is unprecedented in modern times. With the exception of Nazi Germany’s invasion of the Soviet Union, Western military power has never been positioned so close to Russia. The Obama administration’s decision is Russian roulette Washington-style, making the new Cold War even more dangerous than the preceding one. Russia will certainly react, probably by moving more of its own heavy weapons, including advanced missiles, to its Western borders, possibly along with a number of tactical nuclear weapons. Indeed, a new and more dangerous US-Russian nuclear-arms race has been under way for several years, and the Obama administration’s latest decision can only intensify it.

The decision will have other woeful consequences. It will undermine ongoing negotiations between Secretary of State John Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on the Ukrainian and Syrian crises, and it will further divide Europe itself, which is far from united on Washington’s increasingly hawkish approach to Moscow.

Astonishingly, these potentially fateful developments have barely been reported in the US media, and there’s been no public discussion, not even by the current presidential candidates during their debates. Never before in

COMMENT

modern times has such a dire international situation been so ignored in an American presidential campaign. The reason may be that everything related to the new Cold War in US-Russian relations since the Ukrainian crisis erupted in November 2013 has been attributed solely to the “aggression” of Russian President Vladimir Putin or to “Putin’s Russia”—a highly questionable assertion, but long the media’s standard policy narrative.

Every presidential candidate and the leaders of both parties, as well as the editors and writers in the mainstream media who profess to be covering the 2016 campaign, the state of our nation, and world affairs are professionally and morally obliged to bring these dire developments to the fore. Otherwise, they will be harshly judged by history—if anyone is still around to write it.

STEPHEN F. COHEN

Stephen F. Cohen, professor emeritus of Russian studies, history, and politics at New York University and Princeton University, is a Nation contributing editor. His book Soviet Fates and Lost Alternatives: From Stalinism to the New Cold War is available in paperback from Columbia University Press.

A US Refugee Crisis

We helped create the problem; now we must solve it.

As the coauthor, with Senator Ted Kennedy, of the Refugee Act of 1980, I am dismayed at the US government’s iron-fisted response to the refugee crisis on our southwest border. In the last couple of years, tens of thousands of unaccompanied minors and women with their children have crossed our border with Mexico. Coming from Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, the so-called Northern Triangle, these people are primarily fleeing horrific gang violence—violence similar to that found in war zones. In fact, Honduras has the highest homicide rate in the world, with El Salvador not far behind. Failed government institutions, hollowed out by decades of civil war, cannot or will not address this violence—or the unremitting poverty that underlies it.

The US Department of Homeland Security has responded to this crisis mostly with harsh measures intended to deter future inflows. Initially, the DHS jailed the Central American refugees in immigration-detention facilities. The courts halted that practice, since by law children must be turned over to the Department of Health and Human Services after 72 hours for family reunification or other arrangements. The DHS then fast-tracked the migrants’ asylum proceedings, which provoked serious criticism from the American Bar Association’s Commission on Immigration, among others. Few of the migrants were represented by counsel, even though having a lawyer makes an overwhelming difference in the ability to obtain asylum. Just think of children and teenagers on their own trying to master the legal intricacies of asylum proceedings—and in a foreign language, to boot.

In its latest move, the DHS rounded up and deported

about 80 mothers and their children, saying they were here illegally—although this determination of “illegality” was based on the much-criticized fast-track adjudications. The deportations prompted protests from the Democratic presidential candidates, members of Congress, immigration advocates, and the US Commission on Civil Rights.

Meanwhile, in order to keep Central American migrants as far away from the US border as possible, the United States has pressured—as well as paid—Mexico to close down its own southern border and to deport any Central Americans found making their way north. This action flies in the face of US treaty obligations that prohibit sending refugees back to likely harm in the countries they’ve fled. We are using Mexico to do our dirty work.

The pressure on Mexico did have an impact: The number of refugees seeking admission to the United States dropped off dramatically for a while, but late last year it began to escalate again.

Our asylum and refugee procedures are based on the 1980 Refugee Act. Its background was the Vietnam War and the massive exodus of more than 1 million refugees from that region. The law was designed to create a permanent commitment by the United States to accept refugees for resettlement each year.

The experience of that exodus is instructive. Hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese refugees fled in small boats, risking their lives at sea. It was a humanitarian crisis of staggering proportions. The nations where these small boats landed—countries of first asylum—were pushing the refugees back out to sea. No long-term solution was in sight. The United States took a leadership role in resolving the problem.

First, we urged the countries where the boats had landed—nations like Malaysia and Indonesia—to keep the refugees on a temporary basis, and assured them that we’d broker a permanent solution to resettle the refugees elsewhere. And we did. Our success was due in part to the fact that the United States itself accepted about a half-million refugees. I participated in that process as chair of the House Immigration Subcommittee. Ultimately, most of the “boat people” were resettled, in what was probably the most successful such effort since World War II.

But none of the lessons from this experience seem to have rubbed off. Instead of asking the countries of first asylum to provide at least temporary shelter for the Central American refugees, we’re either getting Mexico to block their way or, failing that, sending them back ourselves. Instead of seeking an international commitment to secure this resettlement, the United States is refusing to make any such commitment itself, much less asking other countries to do the same. Instead of establishing the sort of safe, orderly departure process (a process that I initiated) that was developed to prevent Vietnamese refugees from taking to the high seas in small boats, the United States created a small-bore program for Central Americans that, until recently, was absurdly limited to cases involving family reunification. Now, thankfully,

the program is being expanded, and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees will be partially administering it.

The mass exodus from the Northern Triangle should be one that nations of the Western Hemisphere help to resolve—not only by accepting refugees for resettlement, but also by building effective government institutions in the Northern Triangle and addressing the long-term issues of poverty there. But the United States cannot help lead that process until we commit to doing our fair share, not just in terms of funding but in refugee resettlement as well.

One ray of light is that the United States seems to have begun to understand that the problem needs to be addressed at its source. Congress has just provided about \$750 million for programs in the Northern Triangle to halt the exodus. But in recent years, the United States has had a very poor record of nation-building. Our government needs to call on other governments, particularly those in the region, to lend a hand in developing effective institutions to control gangs and address poverty. We may even need a kind of international “police force” to halt the violence.

The United States has a particular responsibility here. After all, we overthrew the democratically elected government of Guatemala in 1954, which led to a cascading series of despotic regimes, including ones that engaged in genocide against their indigenous populations. And for decades, we propped up these right-wing authoritarian regimes, which only perpetuated the bad governance and grinding poverty. The United States cannot pretend that the current conditions in the region, which have triggered the refugee outflow, are unrelated to these long-standing policies and practices.

After its protracted involvement in the Vietnam War, the United States understood that it could not turn its back on the Vietnamese refugees. Now we need to accept that our long and nefarious involvement in Central America has helped spawn the present crisis—and, accordingly, that we are responsible for extending a helping hand to the women and children who are its victims. Turning our backs on them rejects everything that the Refugee Act sought to accomplish, including the humanitarian values that it enshrined in our law.

ELIZABETH HOLTZMAN

Elizabeth Holtzman served as a US congresswoman for New York from 1973 to 1981.

MIGRATION

The Northern Triangle

Homicide rates per 100,000 in the United States, and in the Central American countries from which people are desperately fleeing:



United States

4



El Salvador

40



Guatemala

35



Honduras

84



SOCIALISM

American Exceptionalism

Why do we no longer have a major socialist party in the United States? The answer is complicated, but the question elides the modest success that American socialism enjoyed in the 20th century.



402,489

Votes cast in favor of Socialist Party of America candidate Eugene V. Debs in the 1904 presidential election—nearly 3 percent of the popular vote

1910

The year that Milwaukee became the first major city to elect a Socialist mayor (Emil Seidel). In the 20th century, at least 100 socialists served as mayors of American cities and towns

6

Number of times that Socialist Party candidate Norman Thomas ran for president. In fact, Thomas ran in every presidential election between 1928 and 1948

118,045

The Socialist Party's dues-paying members in 1912

36%

Americans who said they viewed socialism favorably in a 2010 Gallup poll

—Alex Lubben

Eric Alterman



Fear: What Is It Good For?

Our political culture is consistent with earlier eras—but not with the New Deal.

Writing near the turn of the 20th century, the great American scholar, memoirist, and novelist Henry Adams observed that politics has “always been the systematic organization of hatreds.” The robber baron Jay Gould took this to heart when he explained his own theory of staying on top: “pay one half of the working class to kill the other half.”

If you think you’re hearing echoes of our own time in the politics of the Gilded Age, you’re right. In his new book *The Great Exception: The New Deal and the Limits of American Politics*, the historian Jefferson Cowie observes: “The Republicans sought to retain the power of the native-born Protestants, support industry, and [lead the battle] against a raft of ‘intruders.’” Republican Congressman Fred S. Purnell said he found “little or no similarity between the clear-thinking, self-governing stocks that sired the American people and this stream of irresponsible and broken wreckage that is pouring into the lifeblood of America the social and political diseases of the Old World.”

Following the decades of historically low inequality that began with Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal, America has skidded back into distribution patterns that match those of Gould’s day. Corporate profits are the highest ever measured, and workers’ wages are the smallest as a percentage of GDP. Unions are on the ropes, while the superrich celebrate themselves with bought-and-paid-for politicians and media outlets. It’s no wonder that in today’s mash-up of politics, celebrity, and massive wealth, we have a Muslim-defaming, immigrant-blaming presidential candidate leading the Republican pack who combines all three.

In the previous Gilded Age, religion and ethnicity served as the great disunifiers of the working class. In his 2010 book *Why Is There No Labor Party in the United States?*, the sociologist Robin Archer writes that labor leaders, even in their heyday, “feared that if workers were forced to choose between union solidarity and their partisan and religious loyalties, they would choose the latter, and the unions themselves would be destroyed.” Trump’s occasional nods to economic populism no doubt appeal to some union members, but so too, one suspects, does his scapegoating of Muslims and immigrants.

Cowie argues that the Manichaean ethos of our present-day politics is the norm throughout our history, not the exception. Liberals who consistently hark back to the New Deal as a model for how we can create a fairer, more just social order are fooling themselves. The New Deal era and its aftermath actually represent “a sustained deviation, an extended detour...from some of the main contours of American political practice, economic structure, and cultural outlook.” The government’s focus on the well-being of everyday Americans was the result of “short-lived, historical circumstances...generated by the trauma of the Depression and World War II,” and therefore would be impossible to reproduce today.

Among the most obvious differences between then and now is the integration of people of color into the fabric of mainstream society. African Americans in the South were purposely excluded from the New Deal, a political necessity in the eyes of

FDR—and almost all historians—to secure the cooperation of the racist Southern committee chairs in Congress. The civil-rights movement reordered this structure, turning the South red and our cities blue. But the reforms of the Fair Deal and the Great Society focused on individual rights, not on New Deal-style collective action. As Cowie notes:

“The most important democratic advances of U.S. history—for instance, the Emancipation Proclamation and the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts—stand as milestones in a continuing struggle to expand individual rights.” Ironically, the exclusion of black people from the New Deal was probably fundamental to its success.

“The cultural homogeneity of the postwar era—while deeply flawed, problematic, and forced—made the United States just a bit closer to Northern European-style politics,” Cowie explains, “providing, in Richard Hofstadter’s terms, a ‘social-democratic tinge’ where it existed neither before nor



Liberals who hark back to the New Deal as a model of how we can create a fairer, more just social order are fooling themselves.

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Today's expert: John Fleming – authority on senior innovations since 1991

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Next week's topic: "If technology is supposed to make our lives easier, why is my computer so hard to use?"

Today's intra-progressive fights demonstrate the success of a divide-and-conquer strategy that worked well for the plutocracy in the past.

after." Today, individual-centered slogans like the "right to choose," "gay rights," "welfare rights," and "consumer rights" dominate our discourse.

When 1960s-style identity politics supplanted the New Deal's class-based appeal among liberals, it was both a return to normalcy and an invitation to the divide-and-conquer strategy that worked so well for the plutocracy in the past. Today's intra-progressive fights over the centrality of Black Lives Matter, the significance of a female president, and the online manners of "Bernie bros" and their detractors demonstrate just a few of the perils of allowing these divisions to fester at a time when the well-being of everyone but the extremely wealthy is under siege.

Other factors are combining to make a revival of New Deal-style politics seem like a pipe dream. It's not simply that money is massively more powerful than before. According to *The Rise and Fall of American Growth*, a new,

doorstop-size study by the iconoclastic economist Robert J. Gordon, the era of sustained growth on which the social and economic advances of postwar America rested is gone for good. We can now look forward to an age, as Paul Krugman put it, of "stagnant living standards for most Americans...reinforced by a set of 'headwinds': rising inequality, a plateau in education levels, an aging population and more."

Beginning midway through Jimmy Carter's presidency, with the New Deal order wheezing on life support, Democrats tried to save themselves by aping right-wing arguments about government being the problem, not the solution, to the challenges that ordinary Americans faced. By tying themselves to the mast of a corrupt campaign-finance system, they have helped to make it so. Admitting their great mistake in this regard would be a first step; fighting to change it, the necessary next one. ■

NOTE D

FOOTBALL

Super Bowl Suckday

There was a time, way back in the last century, when the Super Bowl was a guaranteed clunker: a preordained blowout where the only reason to tune in

would be the ingenious, quirky creative commercials—stunning examples of the mangled collision of commerce and art. Maybe you had to watch a lopsided 38-9 game, but you got to see Apple leading a revolution in black-and-white against Orwellian subservi-

ence.

This year's Super Bowl was a return to that turgid past, with the Denver Broncos beating the Carolina Panthers 24-10, in a contest with enough flags, fumbles, and failed plays to make up a season-highlight package for the 1976 Tampa Bay Buc-

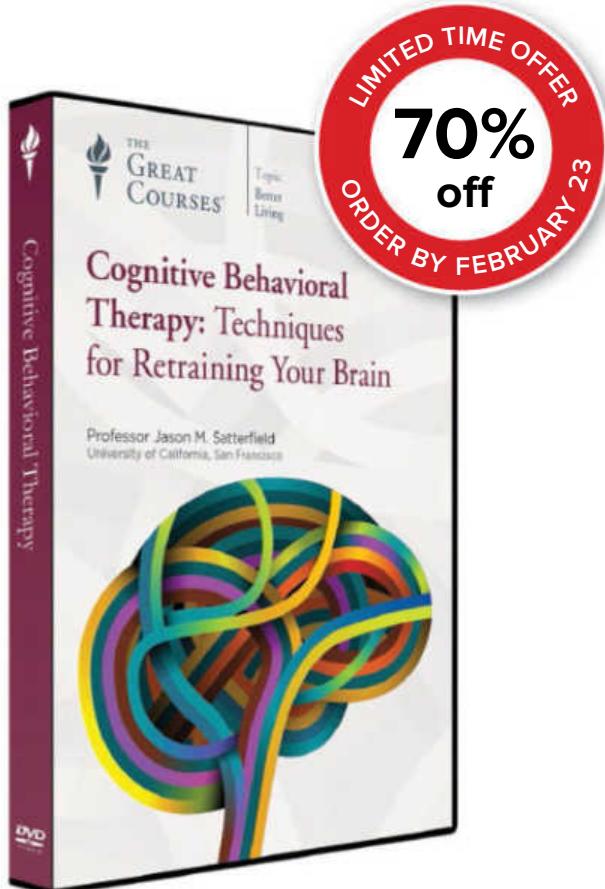
aneers. Yet this year there wasn't even the saving grace of inventive ads. If you were visiting from another solar system, you'd be forgiven for thinking that we're a planet of heterosexual breeders who somehow find people to have unprotected sex with, despite our toe fungus,

irritable-bowel syndrome, and opioid constipation. As much as \$5 million was spent for every 30 seconds of commerce during the game, and Big Pharma was ubiquitous. Coming in second to the parade of drugs were the NFL ads "celebrating" the children born nine months after the Super Bowl throughout the years. It was creepy.

Even the night's highlight, Beyoncé's performance of her fierce new single "Formation," felt as though it were cut way too short because the halftime concert clearly needed more time for... Coldplay. The British band was such an awkward choice for the festivities that its organizers brought in Beyoncé and Bruno Mars to save the day. The pair certainly tried, but Coldplay frontman Chris Martin kept poking his head in between the two like a cold shower. Far more important, Queen Bey's dancers gave us the picture of the night as they held up a sign emblazoned with the words "Justice 4 Mario Woods"—the young man who died in a hail of gunfire at the hands of San Francisco police. The moment demonstrated that the black berets and "X" formation of Beyoncé's set weren't just radical chic, but a true call for justice.

COMIX NATION





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THE CRISIS IN AGRABAH

Aladdin Insane 30%

may be the most disturbing number of this presidential primary season thus far. It's the percentage of GOP voters who favor bombing the sultanate of Agrabah, which looks like this:



In fact, it's the fictional kingdom from the Disney movie *Aladdin*—which is hardly enough to deter the GOP's most warlike contingent of supporters, who are apparently quite happy to bomb anything with an Arabic-sounding name.

Thanks to a deft bit of trolling by the firm Public Policy Polling, we've also learned that

44%

of Democrats support accepting refugees from this nonexistent land of genies, shape-shifters, and flying carpets into the United States.

No Dog Whistle Needed

It's not Trump; the GOP is racist and reckless.

Three years ago, as the Republican-led House of Representatives engineered a brief government shutdown, Congressman Marlin Stutzman (R-IN) explained the strategy underpinning the protest. “We have to get something out of this,” he said. “And I don’t know what that even is.” The shutdown wasn’t a tactic so much as a tantrum, an act of collective petulance posing as politics—inexplicable to the outside world, incoherent in its aims, and incandescent in its rage.

The bizarre circus that the GOP presidential primary has become is not a freak occurrence. Regardless of the eventual nominee, the rise of Donald Trump (“I would bomb the shit out of [ISIS]”), the ascent of Ted Cruz (“To God be the glory”), and the endurance of Ben Carson (“Putin is a one-horse country: oil and energy”) do not contradict the general trajectory of the party, but rather confirm it. This fact-free, bigoted populism awash in money and drowning in misanthropy may illustrate the GOP at its most brazen, but it’s hardly in any way aberrant.

In this regard, Trump is the party’s most obvious emissary. His blatant xenophobia emerges from the GOP’s half-century of race-baiting since Richard Nixon’s Southern strategy was first conceived. The initial idea was to woo Southern whites, who were angry about the advances of the civil-rights movement, with coded racial messaging that wouldn’t alienate the party’s Northern supporters. “You have to face the fact that the whole problem is really the blacks,” Nixon once explained to his chief of staff, H.R. Haldeman. “The key is to devise a system that recognizes that while not appearing to.” This method was once very effective. Ronald Reagan launched his 1980 campaign at the Neshoba County Fair in Mississippi, not far from where three civil-rights activists had been murdered in 1964, by talking about states’ rights. George H.W. Bush had his infamous Willie Horton ad in 1988, while Bush Jr. spoke at Bob Jones University in 2000, where interracial dating was banned at the time.

But with white people heading toward minority status and becoming a lower percentage of the voting public every cycle, the message necessarily gets cruder—particularly with the presence of

Gary Younge



a black president. In the 2012 GOP primaries, former Pennsylvania senator Rick Santorum told a crowd in Iowa that “I don’t want to make black people’s lives better by giving them somebody else’s money,” while Newt Gingrich branded Obama the “food-stamp president.”

So by the time Trump came on the scene, the party had done away with the dog whistle in favor of a police whistle—no codes necessary. The Mexicans are sending us “rapists”; the Chinese are “cheating”; America needs “a total and complete shutdown” on Muslims coming into the country.

Elements of the Republican establishment bristled, of course. Back in 2012, Senator Lindsey Graham was already warning that when it came to “the demographics race,” the GOP was “losing badly. We’re not generating enough angry white guys to stay in business for the long term.”

But that was the business they were in: For a generation, the party had galvanized its base on precisely this kind of message, only more artfully put and more plausibly denied. So when Trump rails against political correctness—which always goes down well on the stump—he’s really just calling for a return to unbridled hate speech. No wonder he comes first in a crowded pack for those Republican voters who want a candidate who “tells it like it is.”



For a generation, the GOP had galvanized its base on this kind of message, only more artfully put and plausibly denied.

Trump’s rallies are also unburdened by either actual policies or tangible facts. He just says stuff—whatever comes into his head, it seems—and people cheer or laugh, but rarely call him on it. Whether it’s true or consistent really doesn’t matter. The fact that Trump was previously pro-choice and pro-single-payer, or that he’s donated money to Hillary Clinton’s senatorial campaigns and had the Clintons at his wedding, is shrugged off. Nobody cares that there’s a net flow of Mexicans *leaving* America: “We’re gonna build a big wall,” Trump says. “It’s gonna be a beautiful wall. It’s gonna be a great

big beautiful wall." His healthcare policy? He's going to replace Obamacare with something "super-terrific."

Any mystery as to why this is working vanishes once one realizes that he's talking to the Republican base, 43 percent of whom still believe that Obama is a Muslim—roughly the same percentage who believe that he was born in America. This is the same party that swift-boated John Kerry and insisted that the Clintons were bumping people off and running drugs into Arkansas. They really don't care about the facts.

Nor did Trump invent this trend. In 2011, GOP primary contender Herman Cain proudly announced that he did not know the name of the president of "Ubeki-beki-beki-beki-stan-stan." More than one in four Republicans in Mississippi, and one in five in Alabama, believed that interracial marriage should be illegal, while closer to two-thirds in both states didn't believe in evolution. Trump is just the most ostentatious and successful

manifestation of this trend, and the Republican hierarchy is stumped on what to do about it.

In 2008, Senator John McCain, the GOP nominee, memorably took the mic from campaign volunteer Gayle Quinnell, who said she couldn't trust Obama because "he's an Arab." "No, ma'am," McCain said. "He's a decent family man, [a] citizen that I just happen to have disagreements with on fundamental issues." Yet without millions of people like Quinnell, McCain would have suffered not just a defeat but a rout. Now the GOP's leaders have ceded the mic once again, and they're struggling to seize it back.

Of course, the Republican establishment never openly embraced such statements. Nonetheless, it was this mixture of racially charged messaging and a tacit acceptance of falsehoods that underpinned the Tea Party's rise. This is the wave of sewage that the GOP surfed all the way to majorities in both houses of Congress. Now they're up to their necks in it. ■

 **TWEET THAT!**

my favorite thing about the twitter wars over bernie bros and hillary bots is how effective they are at winning support for your candidate

@juliacarriew,
journalist Julia
Carrie Wong

SNAPSHOT/FELIPE DANA

Pest Control

At a block parade, part of Carnival in Olinda, Brazil, young people gather around an effigy of the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito lying in a coffin. The parade is designed to teach children about the dangers of the mosquito, which carries yellow fever, dengue fever, and chikungunya—and was recently found to transmit the Zika virus as well.



AP

BACK ISSUES/1956

Is Democracy Possible?

Michelle Alexander's article in this issue cites W.E.B. Du Bois's refusal to vote in the 1956 presidential election, an argument that he outlined in these very pages that October.

Arguing that "there is but one evil party with two names, and it will be elected despite all I can do or say," Du Bois denounced the Eisenhower administration as "dominated and directed by wealth and for the accumulation of wealth. It runs smoothly like a well-organized industry and should do so because industry runs it for the benefit of industry. Corporate wealth profits as never before in history. We turn over the national resources to private profit and have few funds left for education, health or housing."

An interesting historical sidenote: A week later, writing from his home in Big Sur, Henry Miller praised the essay in a letter to *Nation* editor Carey McWilliams. "I didn't know he was still alive," the novelist wrote of Du Bois, then 88. "He was one of the truly deep influences in my life." —Richard Kreytner



VILLAIN OF THE MONTH

Martin Shkreli, who raised the price of a life-saving drug 5,500 percent, takes the Fifth before a congressional committee.

—News reports

Whose smirk enraged us on the telly?
Whose practices are worse than smelly?
Who's lower than a serpent's belly?
The pharmagouger Martin Shkreli.

The other pharma chiefs can heed
Where public outcries sometimes lead.
They all devoutly wish that he'd
Placed modest limits on his greed.

Calvin Trillin
Deadline Poet



BLACK LIVES SHATTERED

by MICHELLE ALEXANDER

The Clintons' legacy has been the impoverishment of black America—so why are we still voting for them?



HILLARY CLINTON LOVES BLACK PEOPLE. AND BLACK people love Hillary—or so it seems. Black politicians have lined up in droves to endorse her, eager to prove their loyalty to the Clintons in the hopes that their faithfulness will be remembered and rewarded. Black pastors are opening their church doors, and the Clintons are making themselves comfortably at home once again, engaging effortlessly in all the usual rituals associated with “courting the black vote,” a pursuit that typically begins and ends with Democratic politicians making black people feel liked and taken seriously. Doing something concrete to improve the conditions under which most black people live is generally not required.

Hillary is looking to gain momentum on the campaign trail as the primaries move out of Iowa and New Hampshire and into states like South Carolina, where large pockets of black voters can be found. According to some polls, she leads Bernie Sanders by as much as 60 percent among African Americans. It seems that we—black people—are her winning card, one that Hillary is eager to play.

And it seems we’re eager to get played. Again.

The love affair between black folks and the Clintons has been going on for a long time. It began back in 1992, when Bill Clinton was running for president. He threw on some shades and played the saxophone on *The Arsenio Hall Show*. It seems silly in retrospect, but many of us fell for that. At a time when a popular slogan was “It’s a black thing, you wouldn’t understand,” Bill Clinton seemed to get us. When Toni Morrison dubbed him our first black president, we nodded our heads. We had our boy in the White House. Or at least we thought we did.

Black voters have been remarkably loyal to the Clintons for more than 25 years. It’s true that we eventually lined up behind Barack Obama in 2008, but it’s a measure of the Clinton allure that Hillary led Obama among black voters until he started winning caucuses and primaries. Now Hillary is running again. This time she’s facing a democratic socialist who promises a political revolution that will bring universal healthcare, a living wage, an end to rampant Wall Street greed, and the dismantling of the vast prison state—many of the same goals that Martin Luther King Jr. championed at the end of his life. Even so, black folks are sticking with the Clinton brand.

What have the Clintons done to earn such devotion? Did they take extreme political risks to defend the rights of African Americans? Did they courageously stand up to right-wing demagoguery about black communities? Did they help usher in a new era of hope and prosperity for neighborhoods devastated by deindustrialization, globalization, and the disappearance of work?

No. Quite the opposite.

WHEN BILL CLINTON RAN FOR PRESIDENT IN 1992, urban black communities across America were suffering from economic collapse. Hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs had vanished as factories moved overseas in search of cheaper labor, a new plantation. Globalization and deindustrialization affected workers of all colors but hit African Americans particularly hard. Unemployment rates among young black men had quadrupled as the rate of industrial employment plummeted. Crime rates spiked in inner-city communities that had been dependent on factory jobs, while hopelessness, despair, and crack addic-

tion swept neighborhoods that had once been solidly working-class. Millions of black folks—many of whom had fled Jim Crow segregation in the South with the hope of obtaining decent work in Northern factories—were suddenly trapped in racially segregated, jobless ghettos.

On the campaign trail, Bill Clinton made the economy his top priority and argued persuasively that conservatives were using race to divide the nation and divert attention from the failed economy. In practice, however, he capitulated entirely to the right-wing backlash against the civil-rights movement and embraced former president Ronald Reagan’s agenda on race, crime, welfare, and taxes—ultimately doing more harm to black communities than Reagan ever did.

We should have seen it coming. Back then, Clinton was the standard-bearer for the New Democrats, a group that firmly believed the only way to win back the millions of white voters in the South who had defected to the Republican Party was to adopt the right-wing narrative that black communities ought to be disciplined with harsh punishment rather than coddled with welfare. Reagan had won the presidency by dog-whistling to poor and working-class whites with coded racial appeals: railing against “welfare queens” and criminal “predators” and condemning “big government.” Clinton aimed to win them back, vowing that he would never permit any Republican to be perceived as tougher on crime than he.

Just weeks before the critical New Hampshire primary, Clinton proved his toughness by flying back to Arkansas to oversee the execution of Ricky Ray Rector, a mentally impaired black man who had so little conception of what was about to happen to him that he asked for the dessert from his last meal to be saved for him for later. After the execution, Clinton remarked, “I can be nicked a lot, but no one can say I’m soft on crime.”

Clinton mastered the art of sending mixed cultural messages, appealing to African Americans by belting out “Lift Every Voice and Sing” in black churches, while at the same time signaling to poor and working-class whites that he was willing to be tougher on black communities than Republicans had been.

Clinton was praised for his no-nonsense, pragmatic approach to racial politics. He won the election and appointed a racially diverse cabinet that “looked like America.” He won re-election four years later, and the American economy rebounded. Democrats cheered. The Democratic Party had been saved. The Clintons won. Guess who lost?

Michelle Alexander is a legal scholar, human-rights advocate, and author of The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness (New Press).

BILL CLINTON PRESIDED OVER THE LARGEST increase in federal and state prison inmates of any president in American history. Clinton did not declare the War on Crime or the War on Drugs—those wars were declared before Reagan was elected and long before crack hit the streets—but he escalated it beyond what many conservatives had imagined possible. He supported the 100-to-1 sentencing disparity for crack versus powder cocaine, which produced staggering racial injustice in sentencing and boosted funding for drug-law enforcement.

Clinton championed the idea of a federal “three

strikes" law in his 1994 State of the Union address and, months later, signed a \$30 billion crime bill that created dozens of new federal capital crimes, mandated life sentences for some three-time offenders, and authorized more than \$16 billion for state prison grants and the expansion of police forces. The legislation was hailed by mainstream-media outlets as a victory for the Democrats, who "were able to wrest the crime issue from the Republicans and make it their own."

When Clinton left office in 2001, the United States had the highest rate of incarceration in the world. Human Rights Watch reported that in seven states, African Americans constituted 80 to 90 percent of all drug offenders sent to prison, even though they were no more likely than whites to use or sell illegal drugs. Prison admissions for drug offenses reached a level in 2000 for African Americans more than 26 times the level in 1983. All of the presidents since 1980 have contributed to mass incarceration, but as Equal Justice Initiative founder Bryan Stevenson recently observed, "President Clinton's tenure was the worst."

Some might argue that it's unfair to judge Hillary Clinton for the policies her husband championed years ago. But Hillary wasn't picking out china while she was first lady. She bravely broke the mold and redefined that job in ways no woman ever had before. She not only campaigned for Bill; she also wielded power and significant influence once he was elected, lobbying for legislation and other measures. That record, and her statements from that era, should be scrutinized. In her support for the 1994 crime bill, for example, she used racially coded rhetoric to cast black children as animals. "They are not just gangs of kids anymore," she said. "They are often the kinds of kids that are called 'super-predators.' No conscience, no empathy. We can talk about why they ended up that way, but first we have to bring them to heel."

Both Clintons now express regret over the crime bill, and Hillary says she supports criminal-justice reforms to undo some of the damage that was done by her husband's administration. But on the campaign trail, she continues to invoke the economy and country that Bill Clinton left behind as a legacy she would continue. So what exactly did the Clinton economy look like for black Americans? Taking a hard look at this recent past is about more than just a choice between two candidates. It's about whether the Democratic Party can finally reckon with what its

policies have done to African-American communities, and whether it can redeem itself and rightly earn the loyalty of black voters.

AN OFT-REPEATED MYTH ABOUT THE CLINTON administration is that although it was overly tough on crime back in the 1990s, at least its policies were good for the economy and for black unemployment rates. The truth is more troubling. As unemployment rates sank to historically low levels for white Americans in the 1990s, the jobless rate among black men in their 20s who didn't have a college degree rose to its highest level ever. This increase in joblessness was propelled by the skyrocketing incarceration rate.

Why is this not common knowledge? Because government statistics like poverty and unemployment rates do not include incarcerated people. As Harvard sociologist Bruce Western explains: "Much of the optimism about declines in racial inequality and the power of the US model of economic growth is misplaced once we account for the invisible poor, behind the walls of America's prisons and jails." When Clinton left office in 2001, the true jobless rate for young, non-college-educated black men (including those behind bars) was 42 percent. This figure was never reported. Instead, the media claimed that unemployment rates for African Americans had fallen to record lows, neglecting to mention that this miracle was possible only because incarceration rates were now at record highs. Young black men weren't looking for work at high rates during the Clinton era because they were now behind bars—out of sight, out of mind, and no longer counted in poverty and unemployment statistics.

To make matters worse, the federal safety net for poor families was torn to shreds by the Clinton administration in its effort to "end welfare as we know it." In his 1996 State of the Union address, given during his re-election campaign, Clinton declared that "the era of big government is over" and immediately sought to prove it by dismantling the federal welfare system known as Aid to Families With Dependent Children (AFDC). The welfare-reform legislation that he signed—which Hillary Clinton ardently supported then and characterized as a success as recently as 2008—replaced the federal safety net with a block grant to the states, imposed a five-year lifetime limit on welfare assistance, added work requirements, barred undocumented immigrants from licensed professions, and slashed overall public welfare funding by \$54 billion (some was later restored).

Experts and pundits disagree about the true impact of welfare reform, but one thing seems clear: Extreme poverty doubled to 1.5 million in the decade and a half after the law was passed. What is extreme poverty? US households are considered to be in extreme poverty if they are surviving on cash incomes of no more than \$2 per person per day in any given month. We tend to think of extreme poverty existing in Third World countries, but here in the United States, shocking numbers of people are struggling to survive on less money per month than many families spend in one evening dining out. Currently, the United States, the richest nation on the planet, has one

**“They
are not just
gangs of kids
anymore...
they are
‘super-
predators.’”**

—Hillary Clinton,
speaking in support of
the 1994 crime bill

Partners in power:
Bill and Hillary
Clinton in 1994,
before addressing
supporters rallying
for healthcare reform.



of the highest child-poverty rates in the developed world.

Despite claims that radical changes in crime and welfare policy were driven by a desire to end big government and save taxpayer dollars, the reality is that the Clinton administration didn't reduce the amount of money devoted to the management of the urban poor; it changed what the funds would be used for. Billions of dollars were slashed from public-housing and child-welfare budgets and transferred to the mass-incarceration machine. By 1996, the penal budget was twice the amount that had been allocated to food stamps. During Clinton's tenure, funding for public housing was slashed by \$17 billion (a reduction of 61 percent), while funding for corrections was boosted by \$19 billion (an increase of 171 percent), according to sociologist Loïc Wacquant "effectively making the construction of prisons the nation's main housing program for the urban poor."

Bill Clinton championed discriminatory laws against formerly incarcerated people that have kept millions of Americans locked in a cycle of poverty and desperation. The Clinton administration eliminated Pell grants for prisoners seeking higher education to prepare for their release, supported laws denying federal financial aid to students with drug convictions, and signed legislation imposing a lifetime ban on welfare and food stamps for anyone convicted of a felony drug offense—an exceptionally harsh provision given the racially biased drug war that was raging in inner cities.

Perhaps most alarming, Clinton also made it easier for public-housing agencies to deny shelter to anyone with any sort of criminal history (even an arrest without conviction) and championed the "one strike and you're out" initiative, which meant that families could be evicted from public housing because one member (or a guest) had committed even a minor offense. People released from prison with no money, no job, and nowhere to go could no longer return home to their loved ones living in federally assisted housing without placing the entire family at risk of eviction. Purging "the criminal element" from public housing played well on the evening news, but no provisions were made for people and families as they were forced out on the street. By the end of Clinton's presidency, more than half of working-age African-American men in many large urban areas were saddled with criminal records and subject to legalized discrimination in employment, housing, access to education, and basic public benefits—relegated to a permanent second-class status eerily reminiscent of Jim Crow.

It is difficult to overstate the damage that's been done. Generations have been lost to the prison system; countless families have been torn apart or rendered homeless; and a school-to-prison pipeline has been born that shuttles young people from their decrepit, underfunded schools to brand-new high-tech prisons.

THIS DIDN'T HAVE TO BE LIKE THIS. AS A NATION, WE had a choice. Rather than spending billions of dollars constructing a vast new penal system, those billions could have been spent putting young people to work in inner-city communities and investing in their schools so they might have some hope of making



Getting "tough on crime": President Clinton sings the national anthem alongside Georgia Police Lt. Ernest Williams in 1994.

By 1996, the penal budget was twice the amount that had been allocated to food stamps.



the transition from an industrial to a service-based economy. Constructive interventions would have been good not only for African Americans trapped in ghettos, but for blue-collar workers of all colors. At the very least, Democrats could have fought to prevent the further destruction of black communities rather than ratcheting up the wars declared on them.

Of course, it can be said that it's unfair to criticize the Clintons for punishing black people so harshly, given that many black people were on board with the "get tough" movement too. It is absolutely true that black communities back then were in a state of crisis, and that many black activists and politicians were desperate to get violent offenders off the streets. What is often missed, however, is that most of those black activists and politicians weren't asking only for toughness. They were also demanding investment in their schools, better housing, jobs programs for young people, economic-stimulus packages, drug treatment on demand, and better access to healthcare. In the end, they wound up with police and prisons. To say that this was what black people wanted is misleading at best.

To be fair, the Clintons now feel bad about how their politics and policies have worked out for black people. Bill says that he "overshot the mark" with his crime policies; and Hillary has put forth a plan to ban racial profiling, eliminate the sentencing disparities between crack and cocaine, and abolish private prisons, among other measures.

But what about a larger agenda that would not just reverse some of the policies adopted during the Clinton era, but would rebuild the communities decimated by them? If you listen closely here, you'll notice that Hillary Clinton is still singing the same old tune in a slightly different key. She is arguing that we ought not be seduced by Bernie's rhetoric because we must be "pragmatic," "face political realities," and not get tempted to believe that we can fight for economic justice and win. When politicians start telling you that it is "unrealistic" to support candidates who want to build a movement for greater equality, fair wages, universal healthcare, and an end to corporate control of our political system, it's probably best to leave the room.

This is not an endorsement for Bernie Sanders, who after all voted for the 1994 crime bill. I also tend to

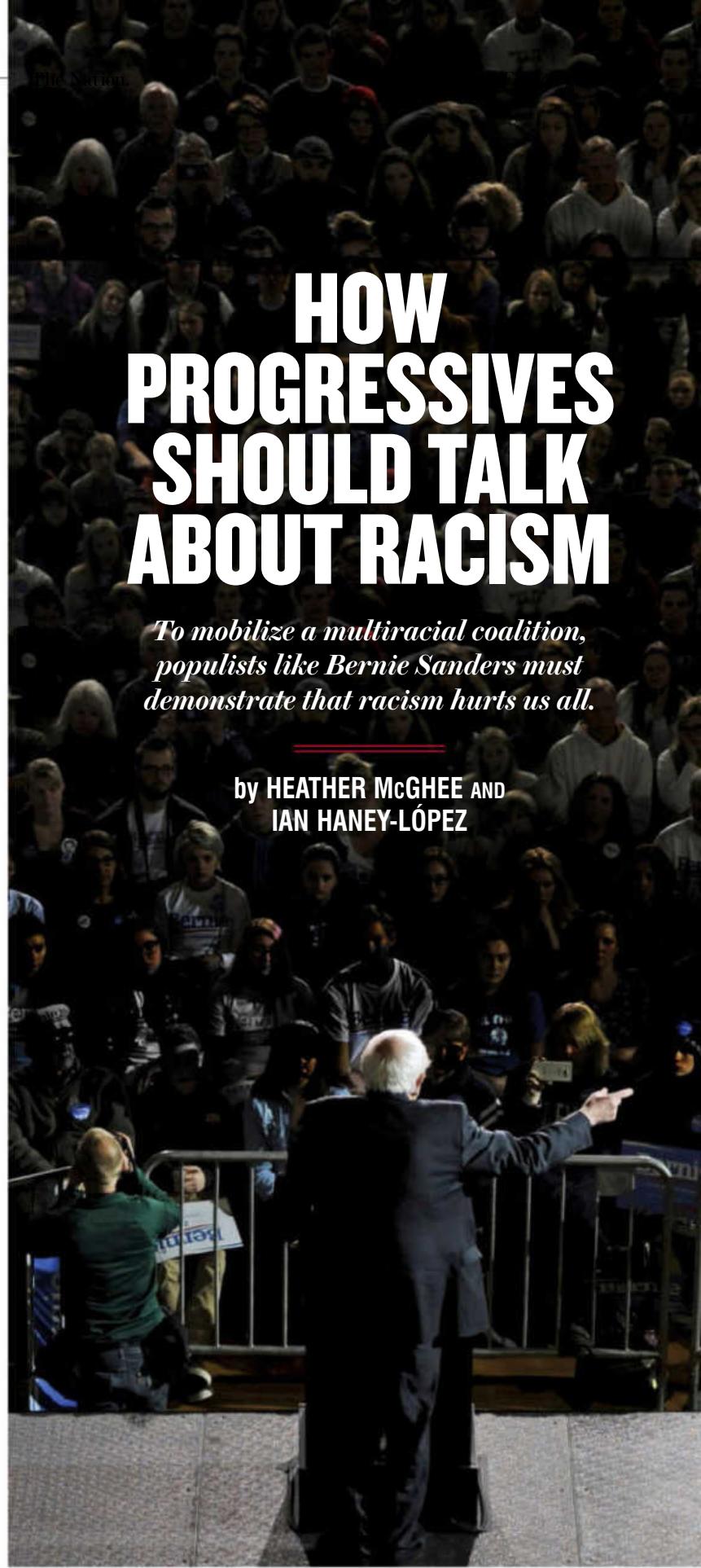
agree with Ta-Nehisi Coates that the way the Sanders campaign handled the question of reparations is one of many signs that Bernie doesn't quite get what's at stake in serious dialogues about racial justice. He was wrong to dismiss reparations as "divisive," as though centuries of slavery, segregation, discrimination, ghettoization, and stigmatization aren't worthy of any specific acknowledgement or remedy.

But recognizing that Bernie, like Hillary, has blurred vision when it comes to race is not the same thing as saying their views are equally problematic. Sanders opposed the 1996 welfare-reform law. He also opposed bank deregulation and the Iraq War, both of which Hillary supported, and both of which have proved disastrous. In short, there is such a thing as a lesser evil, and Hillary is not it.

The biggest problem with Bernie, in the end, is that he's running as a Democrat—as a member of a political party that not only capitulated to right-wing demagoguery but is now owned and controlled by a relatively small number of millionaires and billionaires. Yes, Sanders has raised millions from small donors, but should he become president, he would also become part of what he has otherwise derided as "the establishment." Even if Bernie's racial-justice views evolve, I hold little hope that a political revolution will occur within the Democratic Party without a sustained outside movement forcing truly transformational change. I am inclined to believe that it would be easier to build a new party than to save the Democratic Party from itself.

Of course, the idea of building a new political party terrifies most progressives, who understandably fear that it would open the door for a right-wing extremist to get elected. So we play the game of lesser evils. This game has gone on for decades. W.E.B. Du Bois, the eminent scholar and co-founder of the NAACP, shocked many when he refused to play along with this game in the 1956 election, defending his refusal to vote on the grounds that "there is but one evil party with two names, and it will be elected despite all I do or say." While the true losers and winners of this game are highly predictable, the game of lesser evils makes for great entertainment and can now be viewed 24 hours a day on cable-news networks. Hillary believes that she can win this game in 2016 because this time she's got us, the black vote, in her back pocket—her lucky card.

She may be surprised to discover that the younger generation no longer wants to play her game. Or maybe not. Maybe we'll all continue to play along and pretend that we don't know how it will turn out in the end. Hopefully, one day, we'll muster the courage to join together in a revolutionary movement with people of all colors who believe that basic human rights and economic, racial, and gender justice are not unreasonable, pie-in-the-sky goals. After decades of getting played, the sleeping giant just might wake up, stretch its limbs, and tell both parties: Game over. Move aside. It's time to reshuffle this deck. ■



HOW PROGRESSIVES SHOULD TALK ABOUT RACISM

To mobilize a multiracial coalition, populists like Bernie Sanders must demonstrate that racism hurts us all.

by HEATHER McGHEE AND
IAN HANEY-LÓPEZ

HE ENTHUSIASTIC BUT LARGELY WHITE CROWDS SURROUNDING Bernie Sanders suggest he has a race problem. No Democratic presidential candidate has won a majority among white voters in 50 years, so progressives are understandably excited about his appeal to working-class whites, the lost Reagan Democrats. But what of the Obama Democrats, the multiracial coalition that forms the party's present and the country's future? Whether we can combine these constituencies poses a fundamental challenge for the left. Can progressives finally come together around a unifying message that resonates with whites on class, people of color on race, and the 99 percent on both?

We emphatically say yes. But first, the left must challenge our own orthodoxy, which defines racism as something that solely victimizes people of color. The truth is, a middle class in crisis is what America gets when we'd rather drain the public swimming pool of economic opportunity than let people of color swim, too. By explaining how politicians use racial dog whistles to transmute white anxiety into support for a right-wing economics that harms us all, a populist like Sanders could speak authentically to the whole progressive coalition.

That's not happening now. Instead, Sanders—as well as Hillary Clinton and most liberals—typically addresses race by offering statistics illustrating racial disparities and then stressing the saving power of race-neutral policies. Under pressure to mitigate racial injustice, but fearful of antagonizing whites who resent race-conscious programs, liberals have emphasized class-based programs while sidelining efforts to confront racism directly. To this, white progressives frequently add a certain amount of impatience. Why don't people of color rally around economic populism, they ask, when nonwhites have the most to gain from antipoverty programs?

People of color are rightly skeptical, because Sanders repeatedly stresses that his main focus is economic inequality. When he then adds that he also worries about racial disparities, these concerns come across as an afterthought. Also, liberal universalism smacks of justice delayed: Wait, it seems to say, until poverty is solved for everyone. Finally, color-blind economics raises the question of whether progressives really understand racism's crushing power. *The Atlantic's* Ta-Nehisi Coates recently challenged Sanders: "Jim Crow and its legacy were not merely problems of disproportionate poverty. Why should black voters support a candidate who does not recognize this?"

Yet Sanders's promise is that he can, while simultaneously appealing to white voters—but here he is trapped. Many whites deeply sense that, from police killings to Donald Trump's anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim tirades, racism poisons our society—but they remain uneasy talking about race. Even among the progressive millennials who rally to Sanders, color-blind etiquette dictates that good people should not bring up race, even to address racism. Three out of four young whites now believe that "society would be better off if it were truly color-blind and never considered race or ethnicity." For these folks, foregrounding race seems morally wrong and even borderline racist. There's also a zero-sum mentality in the racial discourse, the sense that focusing on people of color means disregarding whites. When Sanders repeats the refrain that "black lives matter," some whites may see it as kowtowing to a powerful special interest or,

worse, as a form of racial betrayal.

We think a different approach is necessary. To the understanding of racism as violence done to people of color, the progressive movement should add a conception of racism as a political weapon as well—one that is wielded by the elites against the 99 percent, nonwhite and white alike. It is time for Sanders and other economic populists to take up the race conversation with white voters, by directly addressing racial anxiety and its role in fueling popular support for policies that hand the country over to plutocrats.

From the New Deal through the Great Society years of the 1960s, white majorities broadly supported activist government because they saw it helping people like themselves—hardworking, decent, deserving. But as government programs became available to people of color, conservatives saw that they could gain ground by dog-whistling about "welfare queens," "thugs," and other racially charged figures to invoke the specter of liberal government pandering to nonwhites—the very groups whose fortunes seemed to be rising just as life was getting harder for the white working class in the 1970s.

Such rhetoric still animates our politics, whether in terms of people who just want "free stuff," "illegal aliens" as rapists, "runaway spending" under our "food-stamp president," or simply the division of our country into "makers" and "takers." On the basis of such imagery, Republicans today routinely win three out of five white votes nationally (far more in the South) and draw roughly 90 percent of their support from white voters.

But make no mistake: The ultimate target of this strategy isn't people of color, but rather those institutions—especially government and unions—that otherwise stand as countervailing forces to corporate power. Today's right-wing agenda succeeds by converting white anxiety into a distrust of anything public. As the late GOP campaign strategist Lee Atwater explained: "You start out in 1954 by saying, 'Nigger, nigger, nigger.' By 1968 you can't say 'nigger'—that hurts you. Backfires. So you say stuff like 'forced busing,' 'states' rights,' and all that stuff. You're getting so abstract now, you're talking about cutting taxes.... [S]itting around saying 'We want to cut this' is much more abstract than even the busing thing, and a hell of a lot more abstract than 'Nigger, nigger.'" The result is not just policies that harm people of color, but a hamstrung government unable to assist most families. College costs soar when antigovernment dog-whistling results in extreme cuts to state budgets. Union-busting suppresses everyone's wages, yet it wins support because the image of the union worker has been racialized. Racism may have built the white middle class in the postwar era, but ever since Reagan, it has helped to destroy it.

Democrats have struggled to respond. Initially, they opted to stop talking about race. Eventually, they adopted the GOP's tactics. Bill Clinton in particular blew the dog whistle by promising to slash welfare, crack down on crime, and end "the era of big government." Populists remember Clinton's betrayals as inviting Wall Street into the Democratic Party, passing NAFTA, and deregulating finance. But the two trends—giving up on racial liberalism and tipping the scales against workers—were connected. Progressives have been frustrated ever

The right uses racism and dog-whistle politics to undermine those public institutions that limit corporate power.

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since, as they've watched white working-class voters embrace self-defeating policies by supporting politicians who cut taxes on the wealthy, slash social spending, and undermine workers' rights, sometimes at the urging of Democrats themselves.

This is the race story that Sanders and every progressive leader ought to be telling every time they step to a microphone. The reactionary economic agenda made possible by dog-whistle politics not only devalues black lives but immiserates most white families. When conservatives vilify every modest public benefit—from healthcare subsidies to unemployment insurance—as handouts to the undeserving, they shred the social contract for everyone. Progressives should elevate a simple message: When racism wins, everyone loses.

This is not to equate racism's harms to whites with those it inflicts on people of color. Obviously, the damage wreaked by racism on communities of color throughout the life of this country has been much more concentrated, brutal, dehumanizing, and devastating. Nor is this a call to highlight racism's economic implications to the exclusion of its most life-or-death dimensions. Indeed, understanding how political racism works helps explain how institutional racism operates. For example, when Richard Nixon threw himself into dog-whistling, the number of people in state and federal prisons stood at around 200,000. Republicans then started the drumbeat about blacks as marauding criminals and whites as innocent victims; Democrats soon picked up the chorus; and, together, both parties built a carceral system that now warehouses 2.2 million people. A similar story can be told of many other measures, from disinvestment in urban areas to mass-deportation campaigns.

Progressives of every color must acknowledge this, just as we should all endorse targeted reparative policies. If Sanders were to truly get that plutocrats use racism against all of us, with especially devastating results in communities of color, and if he made this central to his stump speech to audiences of all races, he could convince voters of color that he is fighting racism because of—not as a distraction from—his core commitment to challenging corporate power.

This summer, confronted by young black activists, Sanders adopted the cry that black lives matter. He did so in the spirit of acknowledging our shared humanity across color lines. Now there's an opportunity to explain to white audiences that black lives also matter because, when white people doubt this, they are easily lured into fearing people of color and handing over power to billionaires.

Fostering solidarity across racial divisions is the single greatest challenge that America faces in uniting the 99 percent—and until progressives speak to it, our politics and our public policies will serve the 1 percent. Fearful of one another, working people will continue to lose; but standing for each other, we can rebuild the American Dream. We will not get our country back from the very rich until we commit to a vision of "we the people" in which "we" means everyone, not divided by racial fear but convinced of our linked fate. ■

NINETY-FIVE YEARS AGO, THE GREAT LIBERAL ECONOMIST JOHN Kenneth Galbraith declared that the "Democratic Party must henceforth use the word 'socialism.' It describes what is needed." Like many others, however, Galbraith largely dropped the subject in subsequent years. The response to Bernie Sanders's insurgent presidential campaign, along with polls showing that large numbers of young people and minorities in America have a positive view of socialism, suggest that this once-forbidden concept may no longer be taboo.

More than 40 percent of Americans under the age of 30 view socialism favorably, according to the most recent YouGov poll. Positive responses among black Americans have ranged between 29 and 41 percent in recent surveys. A 2011 Pew Research Center poll that omitted the "undecided" option found that 49 percent of its young participants viewed socialism favorably.

The most obvious source of this sea change is the failure of traditional approaches to address the nation's most pressing problems: growing inequality, poverty, economic insecurity, global warming, perpetual war, and the decay and violence visited on black communities. Side by side with the increasing concentration of wealth has been the ever more blatant exploitation of the political power that wealth confers on elites and major corporations, most obviously by the Koch brothers and their right-wing allies.

Widespread dissatisfaction with the status quo creates a climate receptive to sweeping change. But such a climate can also devolve into indifference or cynicism if clear alternatives are not presented. With that in mind, how might a practical and politically viable alternative to our current system actually be constructed? What would socialism look like in 21st-century America?

AT THE CORE OF THE TRADITIONAL SOCIALIST ARGUMENT has always been the judgment that democratic ownership of the nation's wealth—and especially what Marx called the "means of production"—is essential. The question of ownership, however, has rarely been mentioned in conventional political debate. The traditional socialist idea of "nationalized industry" is beyond the pale, and the vast majority of progressives have so far avoided discussing alternatives to the statist socialist model.

Despite his self-definition as a democratic socialist, Sanders has offered what is essentially a strong liberal or social-democratic program of progressive taxation, financial regulation, single-payer healthcare, increased Social Security and income-support programs, and environmental regulation. Although he backs worker-owned companies, Sanders explicitly disavowed government ownership of businesses in his major theme-setting speech at Georgetown University last November.

At the same time, new resources have become available to support the construction of a serious alternative system—one that is "socialist" in content and vision, but also highly democratic and accountable in structure. It is a system that could become increasingly viable as Americans' disillusionment with traditional strategies continues to grow.

*Gar Alperovitz, author of *What Then Must We Do?*, is co-chair of the Next System Project and co-founder of the Democracy Collaborative.*

PRACTICALLY SOCIALISM

Innovative experiments with public ownership point the way toward a more just and sustainable economy.

by GAR ALPEROVITZ



In recent years, there has been a steady buildup of interest in new forms of democratized ownership. Worker-owned cooperatives, neighborhood land trusts, and municipal corporations all democratize ownership in one way or another, but they do so in decentralized rather than statist fashion. The trajectory of change is impressive. Examples of successful worker ownership range from Cooperative Home Care Associates in New York City to the Evergreen complex of solar, greenhouse, and laundry cooperatives in Cleveland. Mayors and city councils in places like Austin, Texas; Madison, Wisconsin; Richmond, California; and New York City have started to provide direct financial or technical support for these developments, suggesting a new nexus of political power.

Older forms of worker ownership—most notably employee stock-ownership plans, or ESOPs—leave much to be desired, but they nonetheless offer a similar sense of what a more expansive buildup in democratized ownership might look like. Approximately 7,000 ESOP enterprises exist nationwide, largely owned by about 13.9 million workers (roughly 3.3 million of whom are no longer active). A number of these companies have attempted to combine unions with ESOP ownership. A related approach is being tested in new union/co-op efforts backed by the United Steelworkers.

CITIES HAVE ALSO BEGUN TO SUPPORT OTHER FORMS of public ownership. Communities as diverse as Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Santa Fe, New Mexico, are working to establish municipally owned banks. In Boulder, Colorado, climate-change activists have triumphed over intense corporate opposition in two major referendum battles to municipalize the local utility. More than 250 community land trusts—a model of city and neighborhood development in which land is socialized to prevent gentrification—have been set up across the country, building on the foundational work done by the Champlain Housing Trust in Burlington, Vermont.

Some 450 communities have also established municipally owned Internet systems, commonly against powerful corporate opposition. In recent years, legislators in 17 states have introduced bills to create state-owned public banks like the nearly century-old Bank of North Dakota. Roughly the same number of states have considered legislation to establish single-payer healthcare programs. In 2016, voters in Colorado will decide via referendum on the single-payer ColoradoCare initiative.

None of these efforts have had a major impact yet, but they all offer blueprints for the development of a larger platform—along with concrete and actionable examples of what a radically new economy would look like at the level of enterprise, neighborhood, municipality, and state. Importantly, many “nonpolitical” Americans—some of whom even identify as conservatives (as opposed to right-wing ideologues)—support such efforts. Rhetoric aside, these conservative Americans also commonly oppose big government, big banks, and big corporations, and are often open to alternatives.

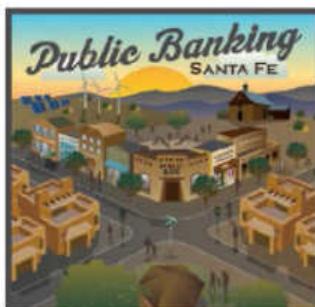
During the 1930s, strategies based on the seemingly modest efforts developed by the states in their “laboratories of democracy” became the basis for key elements of the New Deal—including labor law, Social Security, and a range of other programs. Modern experiments with socialized ownership suggest a trajectory with similarly

far-ranging implications. This will remain true no matter who wins the 2016 presidential race.

THE GREAT 20TH-CENTURY CONSERVATIVE ECONOMIST Joseph Schumpeter once said that the left had missed the boat in its arguments for systemic change. “If radicals were not so fond of chivying the bourgeois,” he declared, they would have realized that not having to depend on taxes was “one of the most significant titles to superiority” they could have advanced in favor of their vision. Indeed, a number of states have gained a great deal of experience owning and managing land, real estate, and mineral rights—and many use the proceeds to fund social services and reduce taxes, although this fact hasn’t received much attention.

Almost 150 years ago, for instance, Texas’s Permanent School Fund took control of about half the land and associated mineral rights in the public domain. In 1953, the state added coastal “submerged lands” to the portfolio after the federal government relinquished them. Each year, distributions from the earnings support education in every county of Texas (\$838.7 million in fiscal year 2015 alone). Another fund, the Permanent University Fund, owns more than 2 million acres of land and helps underwrite the state’s public-university system. In these and other cases, social ownership supports public education in ways that also significantly reduce the tax burden.

Similar sovereign-wealth funds exist in Louisiana, New Mexico, Wyoming, and North Dakota. Alaska, of course, famously collects and invests revenue from extraction of the state’s oil and minerals. Dividends are paid out annually to state residents as a matter of legal “right”—the only practical model in the United States of publicly supported income with no additional work requirement. In 2008, under the governorship of Tea Party favorite Sarah Palin, each resident received \$2,069—over \$10,000 for a family of five—from these “socialized” funds. That year, Palin also signed into law a bill that gave every resident an extra \$1,200 from the state’s natural-resource revenues.



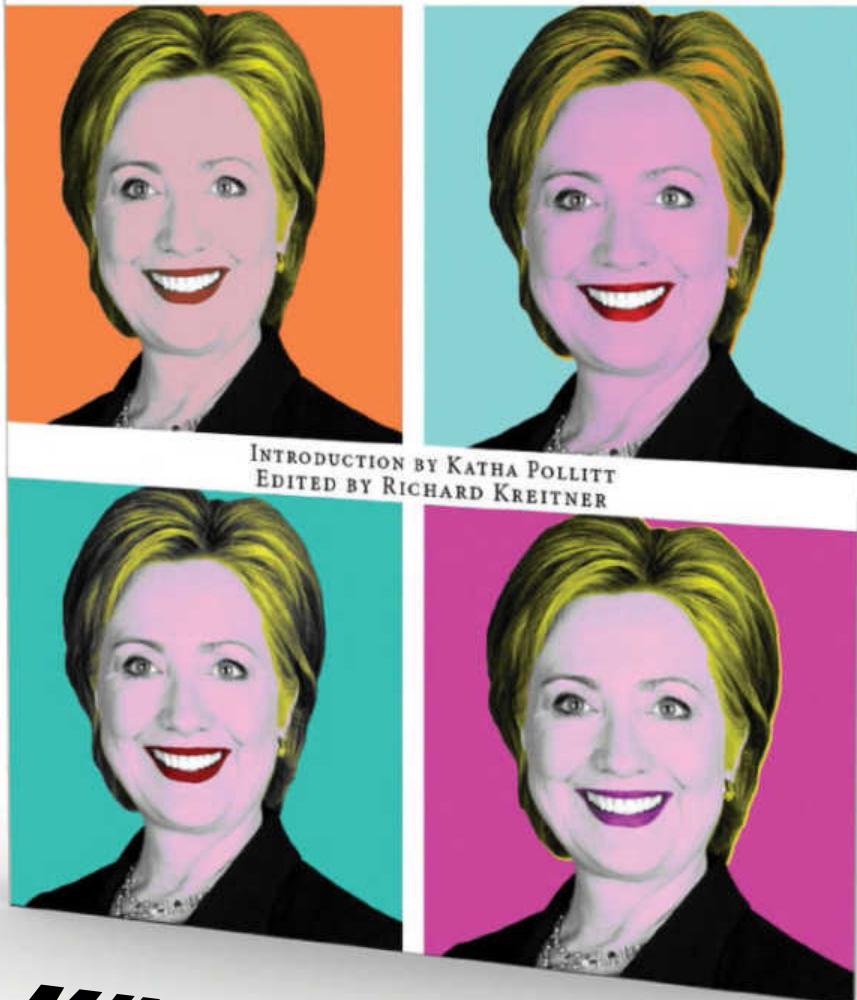
The general argument for democratized ownership has always been much broader than simply capturing profits for social use.

THE GENERAL ARGUMENT FOR PUBLIC OWNERSHIP has always been much broader than simply capturing profits for social use. For one thing, unlike private corporations, publicly owned enterprises are not required to grow to meet Wall Street’s demand for ever-increasing profits—a critical consideration in any serious effort to move beyond our current “growth at all costs” system toward a more sustainable model. Public forms of enterprise can also be made far more transparent than private firms, and they’re more open to regulation, especially concerning climate change. And, critically, they can be excluded from funding political campaigns.

An obvious question is what to do about large-scale industry—a subject that many have simply avoided, preferring instead to focus on local strategies. Yet even the economist and self-proclaimed socialist E.F. Schumacher, author of the classic *Small Is Beautiful*, judged that “the idea of private ownership becomes an absurdity” on a larger scale. Americans witnessed this during the most recent financial crisis, when the federal government de-

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facto nationalized several banks, two auto companies, and the insurance giant AIG. The government gave them back once the crisis was over, but when the next crisis hits, a future progressive government might well turn them into publicly owned features of a new system. (Breaking up the banks, as some have proposed, would likely produce a subsequent reconsolidation of power—as AT&T and Standard Oil showed after they were broken up.)

A major problem involves the inevitable institutional power that comes with such large scale. During the 1960s and '70s, the pathbreaking radical historian William Appleman Williams suggested that one way for socialists to deal with this challenge was to focus on regions rather than the national system as a whole—especially in a country the size of the United States.

Modern innovators are bringing a similar idea to life as they experiment with regional models. “Bio-regional” efforts that anchor economic, social, and environmental development in natural regions can be found in places as diverse as the Connecticut Valley and the Ozark Mountains. The Kansas Area Watershed Council, for example, supports sustainable development in the prairie region through a range of projects and community-building events, and the Salmon Nation project is bringing a similar perspective to the Pacific Northwest. Nine states, mainly in New England, have formed the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative to reduce emissions. Another effort, Food Solutions New England, has put forward a comprehensive plan to develop a robust, collaborative, sustainable, and equitable regional food system by 2060.

The most important precedent for a long-term regional plan is the Tennessee Valley Authority. Established by the New Deal, this public-energy corporation currently serves 9 million people in seven states. At one point in the 1930s, Franklin Roosevelt supported legislation that would have created seven “little TVAs” as a step toward a much more expansive economic-development plan. “If we are successful here,” he argued, “we can march on, step by step; in a like development of other great natural territorial units within our borders.”

Although many mid-century theorists and planners believed in the promise of such regional proposals, the development of a more expansive, democratic, and ecologically sustainable regionalist vision was hampered by the centralizing thrust of the New Deal and then cut short by World War II. The TVA itself lost direction and largely succumbed to bureaucratic and other corrosive pressures.

Nevertheless, as today’s regional efforts show, the concept has endured. It’s also worth noting that conservative support for decentralized forms of public ownership may not be totally foreclosed. In 2013, President Obama proposed privatizing the TVA in his annual budget, but a group of Republican legislators, concerned with higher prices for consumers and less money for their states, vigorously (and successfully) opposed the idea. A new and more radical regionalism might also draw some lessons from the conservative Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), which has recently funded innovative efforts to help move the area away from a coal economy. One such effort is Kentucky’s Shaping Our Appalachian Region (SOAR), which is working to develop local food systems, broadband Internet infrastructure, new businesses, youth engagement, and a stronger cultural identity.



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The Chesapeake Bay Commission, which includes Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia, has brought together a broad coalition to deal with the pollution that threatens the ecological health of a shared regional resource.

California—itself equivalent in scale to a sizable region (and appropriately understood as such)—is a national leader in developing regional climate-change solutions. In October 2015, Governor Jerry Brown signed the most comprehensive and far-reaching climate-change bill that any state has enacted since California first passed landmark climate-change legislation in 2006. The new law requires state utilities to purchase 50 percent of their power from renewable sources by 2030; it also doubles the energy-efficiency requirements of buildings and provides incentives for creating the charging stations needed by electric vehicles.

A new politics could infuse local examples of public ownership with fresh energy, and perhaps scale them up.

ANOTHER PROMISING STRATEGY IS TO COMBINE elements of these various approaches. There is no reason that large-scale enterprises couldn’t be structured as joint ventures that would include worker, community, and regional institutions. Many states and localities across the country collaborate to manage, regulate, and share the benefits of publicly owned electric utilities. Roughly 25 percent of the nation’s electricity is, in fact, supplied by publicly owned firms and co-ops. In conservative Nebraska, every resident and business gets its electricity from a local public utility or cooperative. In both liberal and conservative states, examples of public ownership—municipally owned hospitals, hotels, convention centers, transit systems, ports, and airports, among many other services—are ubiquitous. A new politics might one day infuse these local efforts with fresh purpose and energy, and perhaps scale them up to the state or regional level.

None of this is to suggest that large-scale political change is imminent or inevitable. Social, economic, and environmental conditions—to say nothing of assaults on traditional liberties—are likely to get worse before they get better. For precisely this reason, the systematic development of a practical alternative to the status quo is critically important.

The change we need will not come from the top. As we’ve seen in countless ways, our current political system limits the potential for traditional progressive strategies. A new vision—one that encompasses fresh political strategies as well as new political-economic content—must be built from the bottom up. The overarching goal must be to develop a set of ideas that challenge the dominant ideologies and move the country in a fundamentally new direction.

The Sanders insurgency, the polling data, and the growing experimentation with a range of alternatives all suggest that we may be on the brink of a new era—an extended and difficult period in which a new economy is slowly forged. Such a system might perhaps be called a “pluralist commonwealth” to reflect its diverse forms of common ownership. But whatever we call it, it is time to start discussing this system more openly and to refine its practical elements. As ever-greater numbers of Americans are forced to ask fundamental questions about where their nation is going, we must start offering the answers. ■



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The longtime Cuba correspondent for *The Nation*, Peter Kornbluh, is Cuba analyst at the National Security Archive in Washington, DC. He is the author of *Bay of Pigs Declassified*, co-author of *The Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962*, and co-author of the recently published *Back Channel to Cuba: The Hidden History of Negotiations Between Washington and Cuba*, chosen by *Foreign Affairs* as Best Book of the Year.

Charles Bittner



For almost two decades, Charles Bittner has served as *The Nation*'s academic liaison. He's hosted five previous *Nation* trips to Cuba and teaches in the sociology department at St. John's University.

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Will Normalization Help Cuba?

Cubans are divided, both by generation and class, over whether better relations with the United States will be good for their country.

by SUJATHA FERNANDES

The seawall before the storm: Havana's famed Malecón in the days before the tourist invasion.



IN LATE JANUARY, THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION ANNOUNCED that it would remove a number of impediments to trade with Cuba by lifting restrictions on the American financing of exports, relaxing limits on shipping goods, and further loosening the constraints on travel. These and other measures have come in the wake of a major policy change announced by President Obama in late 2014. Normalization—the decision to restore diplomatic ties with Cuba—was welcomed enthusiastically by policy-makers on both sides of the Florida Straits as the beginning of the end of an archaic isolation strategy with roots in a now-defunct Cold War. Although the US economic blockade of Cuba remains in place, these increased ties could provide the impetus for winning congressional support to end it.

When I spoke with ordinary Cubans at the time of Obama's initial announcement, they were much more ambivalent about the proposed changes. "We have to make sure that this is not another Pact of Zanjón," said an older Afro-Cuban woman, referring to the capitulation of the Cuban Liberation Army to the Spanish colonizers after the Ten Years' War for independence ended in 1878. Many Cubans were concerned to see how the changes would affect their everyday lives, and surmised that there would be drawbacks as well as benefits.

One year on, several changes have followed the restoration of diplomatic relations. During 2015, the number of American tourists visiting the island (excluding Cuban-Americans) rose by 77 percent. To accommodate this surge, the Cuban Tourism Ministry is giving contracts to luxury developers and investors to build five-star hotels, resorts, and golf courses. Over the past year, the Cuban government has received senior US officials, heads of industry, and executives from corporations like Google to discuss possible trade deals and investment opportunities.

These initiatives build on the reforms that have already been under way in Cuba for the past several years, including the legalization of small private enterprises, a new law allowing direct investment by foreigners, and a series of export-oriented projects.

Cubans are now divided on whether they think normalization is a good thing for Cuba. A younger generation desiring greater economic opportunities, as well as entrepreneurs, small-business owners, artists, and others well-placed to reap the benefits from visiting delegations, tourism, and foreign investment, have welcomed the changes. But many of the older Cubans I spoke with—particularly those who work in the state sector of the economy for fixed salaries, which average 640 pesos a month (about \$28), as well as others who have little access to remittances or tourist dollars—now seemed to believe more firmly that normalization will have a negative impact on the country. Older Cubans specifically mentioned rising income inequality as a key concern.

When I first visited Cuba 18 years ago, the country was still reeling from the collapse of the Soviet Union, its main trading partner, which resulted in the loss of 73 percent of its international trade. The ration stores were empty, and there weren't many options for eating out other than a few state-run restaurants. In response to the transportation crisis, drivers were required to pick up hitchhikers at major intersections (a law that was enforced by the police), and Cubans crammed into bulky pink steel vehicles constructed out of 18-wheeler semis, dubbed *camellos* (camels) for the humps in back and in front. Local popular-music venues like the jazz club La Zorra y el Cuervo and the Casa de la Música in Miramar were frequented almost entirely by foreign tourists.

Sujatha Fernandes, a professor of sociology at Queens College and the CUNY Graduate Center, is the author of Cuba Represent!, Who Can Stop the Drums?, Close to the Edge, and, forthcoming next year, Mobilizing Stories.

Today, middle-class areas like Vedado host a lively scene of Cuban-owned and Cuban-patronized restaurants known as *paladares*, and it can be hard to get even a weeknight reservation at an upscale *paladar* like Starbien. On a main thoroughfare called Reina in Central Havana, there are many small businesses, such as a bridal-photography store decked out with elaborately dressed mannequins in the windows. The store is owned by a local woman who started it with her profits from sex work. Meanwhile, rural Cubans in search of economic opportunities are migrating en masse to the urban areas, where they barely eke out an existence in the impoverished working-class barrios and crowded illegal settlements on the outskirts of the city. Whereas all Cubans, from janitors to brain surgeons, once earned similar salaries, in 2014 the government used the revenue from overseas medical missions to raise the salaries of some local medical professionals to as much as 1,600 pesos a month, while workers in some productive state companies and cooperatives can earn as much as 2,000 pesos, depending on the company's earnings.

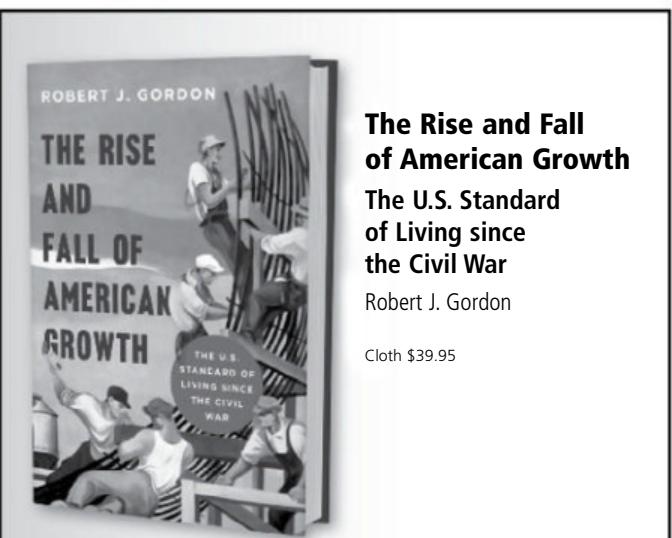
The growing divide between the haves and the have-nots precedes the recent opening with the United States, but some Cubans feel that the specter of what is to come—an onslaught of American tourists, trade deals with American corporations, free-trade zones, and foreign control of Cuban enterprises—will exacerbate inequality in a way that may become irreversible. This division is also racialized, with Afro-Cubans having less access to remittances and jobs in the tourist sector, poorer-quality housing that is harder to rent to tourists, and a lack of start-up capital for small businesses. As one Cuban antiracism activist put it, “Will Netflix and Coke negotiate business deals with people in the barrios?”

One retired university professor told me that she saw normalization as leading to the demise of the socialist system. The state-controlled economy didn’t work without Soviet subsidies, she acknowledged. But market reforms and trade deals with US corporations would threaten the system of socialized healthcare, education, and welfare that all Cubans—especially the poorest—depend on.

Others expressed concern that Cuba was trading its relative independence in the post-Soviet era for a neocolonial relationship with the United States. Cuban diplomat José Viera referred to a widely circulated 19th-century image of Cuba as a fruit hanging from the Spanish tree. At some point, it was predicted, this fruit would ripen and fall into the lap of the Americans. For some Cubans, Viera added, that moment is now.

One evening in late January, I stopped by La Zorra y el Cuervo to see Roberto Fonseca and his Latin jazz band. The small, intimate club on the downtown strip of La Rampa was packed, and bouncers had to turn away a long line of people waiting at the entrance. During the show, Fonseca addressed his audience in Spanish and invited them to tap out familiar rhythms and join in humming some well-known Cuban melodies. When a Cuban singer took the stage, she sang an old Cuban bolero, “Lágrimas Negras” (Black Tears), and soon had the audience—which included both Cubans and many returning migrants—singing along with her. There was a bittersweetness to their words, which seemed to invoke Cuba’s dilemma today:

I go with you, beloved,
Although it costs me my life....
A gardener of love plants a flower and leaves.
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To which of the two does it belong? ■



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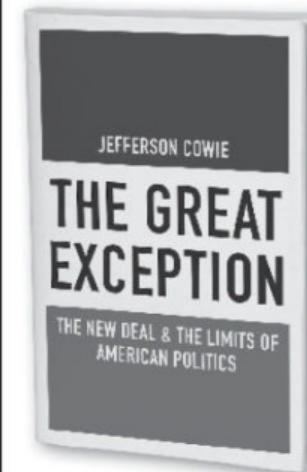
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Letters

(continued from page 2)

tail corporations deserve your ire more than this advice columnist does. We provide them with tax breaks and get nothing in return—their faraway CEOs and shareholders prosper, while our children bring their own pencils to public school. The positions most retailers provide for our fellow citizens are low-wage, dead-end jobs—an institutionalized theft of the workers' time. And with employees unable to eke out a living and given no health insurance, we subsidize these retailers (again) with our tax dollars in the form of food stamps or Medicaid.

Larson's claim that, as consumers, we all pay for shoplifting, deserves a serious look. A CNN Money report, based on data from the UK-based Center for Retail Research, estimated that theft cost the US consumer \$423 in 2010. That's a lot of money for most Americans. But not only is more theft committed by store employees than by shoplifters (regardless of whether the culprit is starving, politically motivated, mad at the boss, or thrill-seeking); CNN reported that the far bigger theft problem is from organized crime—gangs who steal goods in bulk for resale. That's why luxury goods like perfume and anything with the Apple logo are so frequently stolen: The black-market markup on such items is very high.

All in all, it's unlikely that very much of that \$423 consumer cost can be blamed on individual shoplifters. But, of course, some of it can be. Poignantly, one of the most commonly stolen items is infant formula, suggesting that some of these shoplifters are indeed desperate. If a person is risking criminal penalties to feed herself, her baby, or even an unemployed partner, itulti-

mately seems petty to ask that she first consider the impact on my Target Red Card.

LIZA FEATHERSTONE
NEW YORK CITY

Waging Good Journalism

I just finished reading Gabriel Thompson's "This Is What \$15 an Hour Looks Like" [Jan. 25/Feb. 1]. Bravo to your magazine for such a masterful piece of journalism. As a former journalist and community advocate, I commend you for publishing such a comprehensive piece of work—one that connects the dots between higher wages and the ability of millions of people to get out of poverty and live lives that are not permeated with anxiety every minute of every day. How do I know this writer was successful? His article brought me to tears. How often does that happen when one reads most daily news rags? Woe to us as Americans if we cannot get wages higher nationwide!

Thanks for keeping strong journalism alive!

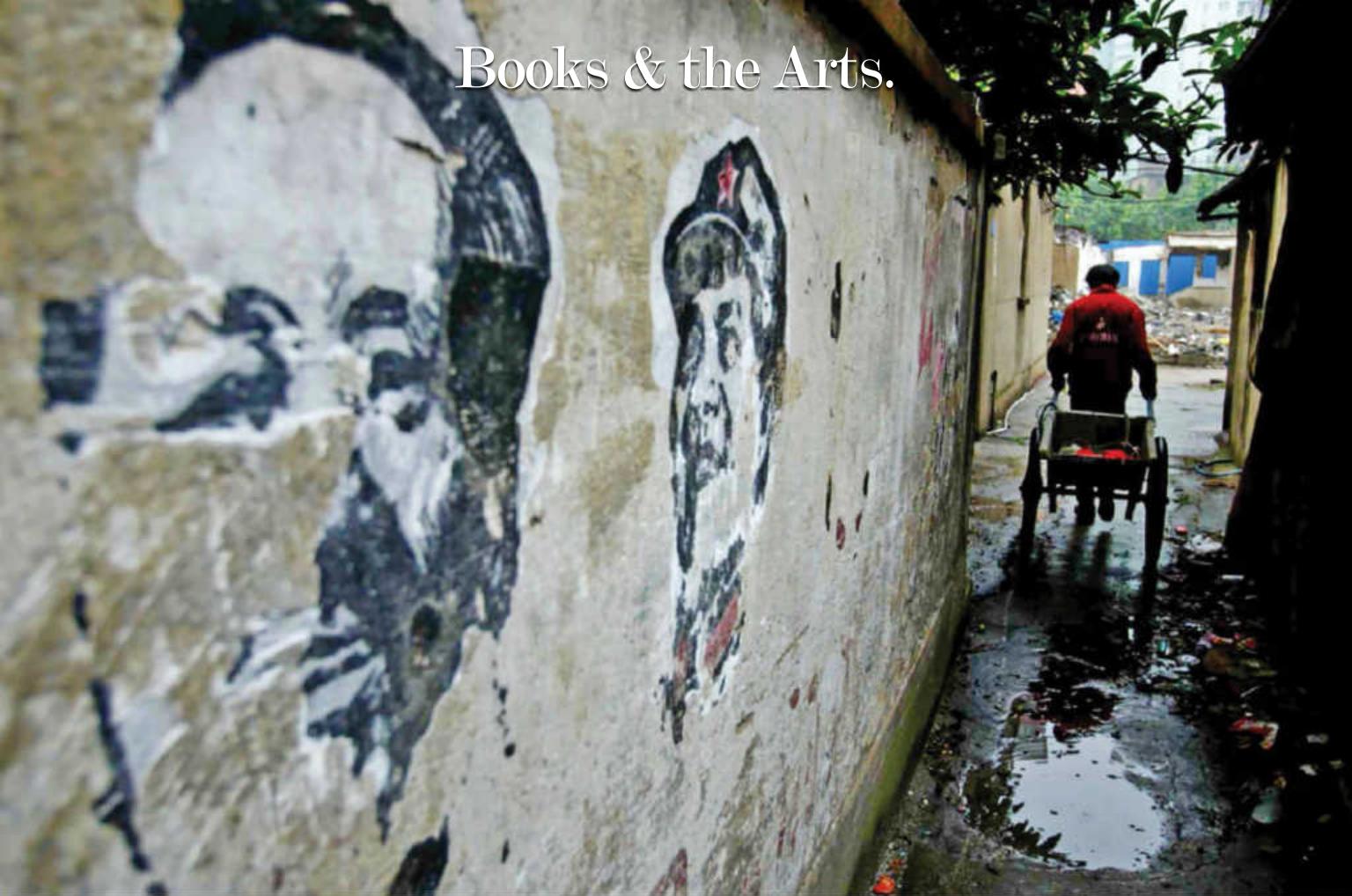
JOAN HALGREEN
RED WING, MINN.

Nader's Debaters

With regard to Bill Wiseman's letter to the editor [Jan. 25/Feb. 1] concerning Mark Green's article, "Nader Then and Now": One may have any number of issues on which to disagree with Ralph Nader; however, once and for all, please acknowledge that the people who voted for Nader did not give Florida's "electoral votes to George W. Bush"—the right-wing Supreme Court did that. And we allowed it to stand! We all share some shame and some blame in that, but a vote for Nader had little to do with it.

ALAN MYERSON
CULVER CITY, CALIF.

Books & the Arts.



Worn portraits of Mao Zedong in Shanghai, China, 2006.

A Willful Amnesia

by CHENXIN JIANG

When Mao Zedong launched the Cultural Revolution in 1966 to purge purported traditionalists and bourgeois revisionists from China's new socialist society, his student followers started building "cowsheds." These ramshackle jails took their curious name from their prisoners, known as "cow devils" after the demons familiar from Buddhist folklore. Most cow devils were intellectuals treated as class enemies: writers, professors, even party loyalists. The overseers of the cowsheds were usually Red Guards, militant college students who had seized power on campuses across China and enjoyed lording it over their former teachers.

Ji Xianlin was among the many bewildered professors who found themselves locked up in a cowshed at Beijing's prestigious

Peking University, the Cultural Revolution's first site of radicalization. More than 20 years later, on the brink of the Tiananmen Square protests, Ji wrote a memoir of his time in the cowshed. It was published in 1998 as *Niupeng Zayi*, or *Memories of the Cowshed*, and has become the most widely read account of the Cultural Revolution. (New York Review Books has just published my translation of Ji's memoir as *The Cowshed: Memories of the Chinese Cultural Revolution*.) Despite his book's passionate critique of the Communist Party's uneasy relationship to its own recent history, Ji was not a dissident. On the contrary, he remained a party member after the era, using his political connections to sidestep the official restrictions on writing about sensitive historical subjects in order to get his eyewitness account into print. Then as now, very few books were published in mainland China about the brutal ideology and actions that stained Mao's legacy. Forthright discussion of the Cultural Revolution is still scarce. *The Cowshed* is even

more rare: an expression of dissent from within the Chinese establishment.

Ji Xianlin was born in 1911, to a peasant family in the impoverished flatlands of Shandong Province, just a few weeks before the overthrow of the Kuomintang, the last of China's imperial governments. After completing his education in China, Ji spent a decade studying in Germany, specializing in Sanskrit and Pali; he returned to his homeland shortly after the Communists took power in 1949. He soon became the chair of the Eastern Languages department at Peking University.

Ji's perfect class background shielded him from a series of increasingly savage political purges. But when the Cultural Revolution broke out, authority figures were the Red Guards' first targets, and as a prominent professor he was especially vulnerable. Ji further jeopardized his position by openly criticizing Nie Yuanzi, a powerful leader of campus radicals. Nie's cadre retaliated by raiding Ji's

Chenxin Jiang is a literary translator based in Chicago and Shanghai and a senior editor at Asymptote.

house and destroying his belongings. Ji contemplated committing suicide by taking an overdose of sleeping pills, but before he could act he was arrested and hauled away to a mass rally. The cowshed where he was eventually confined was steps from the classrooms where he used to teach.

In his memoir, Ji vividly describes the degrading tasks assigned to him and other cow devils as part of their “reform through labor.” They were humiliated at interminable “struggle sessions,” forced to memorize long passages from Mao’s sayings, and often viciously beaten or tortured. In one especially gruesome episode, Ji was forced to stand in an awkward position while wearing a heavy wooden board around his neck bearing his name; the board’s wire necklace ate into his flesh. He was also brutally beaten. The following day, barely able to walk, he was made to plant sweet-potato seedlings. His body collapsed from the strain; his testicles became so swollen that he couldn’t stand up.

Although Ji was released from the cowshed after nine months, he was stripped of his teaching job and given a lowly position as a campus security guard. Yet when the Cultural Revolution ended in 1976 with Mao’s death, Ji still considered himself a supporter of the movement that had nearly wrecked his life. He was willing to overlook the personal injustice he had experienced and to continue to believe that the party was just.

Like many intellectuals, Ji had experienced communism as something of a conversion experience. He recalls in his book that when he first made a speech in the 1950s criticizing himself in an early thought-reform campaign, he “came away feeling lighter, stronger, cleansed.” Before long, Ji had internalized the party line that workers, soldiers, and peasants were heroes, whereas intellectuals like himself were to be distrusted. He castigated himself for not having taken part in the war against the Japanese. He had been stranded in Nazi Germany during the war, or, as he put it, “selfishly pursuing my own academic career thousands of miles away.”

Only much later, during the liberalizing 1980s, could Ji admit to himself that Maoist indoctrination had blinded him to the party’s explicitly anti-intellectual biases, which had culminated in the violence of the Cultural Revolution. Writing *The Cowshed* made him rethink his unquestioning support of the party and its policies. Ji saw himself as speaking for an entire generation of intellectuals who had supported the Communist Party and had been disillusioned by the brutal treatment they had received.

Many elite intellectuals of Ji’s genera-

tion didn’t survive the Cultural Revolution. The novelist Lao She, often mentioned as a Nobel Prize contender, drowned himself in Beijing’s Taiping Lake. Fu Lei, an influential translator and cultural critic, hanged himself. Intellectuals were not the movement’s only victims: Scores of rebel Red Guards were slaughtered by the People’s Liberation Army or in factional violence; in the countryside, class enemies such as landlords and rich peasants were executed. Yet intellectuals were one of the Cultural Revolution’s prime targets, especially in its early years. Several intellectuals later wrote about their experiences, often in valedictory end-of-career essays, but few of those who’d stayed in China described the violence in damning detail. Ji waited in vain for another survivor to write about the cowsheds. He eventually realized that instead of “waiting for someone to write the book I wanted to read, I thought I might as well roll up my sleeves and write it myself.”

As soon as Ji finished his manuscript, it became clear that publishing it would be out of the question. The manuscript is dated April 5, 1989. Ten days later, the death of popular leader Hu Yaobang sparked massive protests in Tiananmen Square. Once more, as during the Cultural Revolution, Beijing’s universities were at the center of a nationwide political movement, burning with talk of democratic reform. Soon, hundreds of thousands of students would be demonstrating for democracy in cities all over China. But in June, the brutal repression of the protests in Tiananmen Square abruptly quashed any hopes for reform. Ji was sympathetic to the students’ demands and horrified by the crackdown, which killed hundreds of protesters. Yet like many other victims of the Cultural Revolution, he was still working alongside his erstwhile persecutors at Peking University, and revisiting the past would deeply embarrass colleagues who had opposed him. Ji shoved his manuscript in a drawer.

For years after the June 4 military crackdown, any criticism of the party was extremely fraught. But the mood changed in the late 1990s, once former premier Deng Xiaoping’s economic reforms had taken hold. Bill Clinton spoke at Peking University during a high-profile visit in 1998—the first such appearance in China by a US president since 1989. Observers hoped that Zhu Rongji, the new premier, would be a reformer, but most important, “Made in China” goods were finding their way to shelves the world over, which encouraged talk of China joining the World Trade Organization.

In Ji’s view, China’s startling economic ascent has been fueled by a deliberate and unconscionable attempt to erase its recent history. Failing to look squarely at its traumatic past “threatens to endanger China’s progress,” he wrote—perhaps even with the events of Tiananmen in mind. At the time, Ji was nearly 90, so he decided not to delay publishing his memoir any further. He’d even rewritten the manuscript to tone it down and avoid naming his colleagues, although he figured several acquaintances would inevitably recognize themselves in his descriptions.

But finding a publisher for *The Cowshed* wasn’t easy. Although it was gradually becoming possible to speak more openly about the Cultural Revolution within China, much of the information available to Western readers about the movement’s worst excesses was still banned. Copies of Jung Chang’s best-selling 1991 memoir *Wild Swans*, for instance, could only be illicitly obtained from Hong Kong or Taiwan. Public discussion of Mao’s failings was still taboo. In an interview he gave to his assistant Cai Degui shortly before his death in 2009, Ji spoke candidly about how he got *The Cowshed* published. He knew of other authors whose books on the Cultural Revolution had been turned down, so he went directly to the top, approaching an editor at the publishing press affiliated with the Central Party School, a Marxist training ground for cadres. The editor, Qu Wei, loved the book and advocated for it, calling it “a warning to every Chinese person with a conscience.” Incredibly, Ji made his political statement against the party through the publishing arm of a major party institution.

Given his fidelity to the party, Ji was an ideal candidate for public reflection on the Cultural Revolution. If Beijing was feeling confident enough to allow a modicum of discussion about the past, who better to write about the cowshed than a loyal scholar whose reputation hadn’t suffered? After all, despite his misgivings, Ji had remained a party member, and his name had been officially cleared. His self-proclaimed political naïveté notwithstanding, Ji’s political star had continued to climb. In 1978, he was named vice president of Peking University. He’d even served on national advisory bodies such as the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference.

As things turned out, however, the authorities were nervous. An unofficial injunction restricted media coverage of Ji’s memoir to no more than 100 words. Beijing’s unease was somewhat justified: Not only did Ji have the political connections necessary to get a sensitive book published; he was also a well-known essayist with a large following, and

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—Victor Navasky

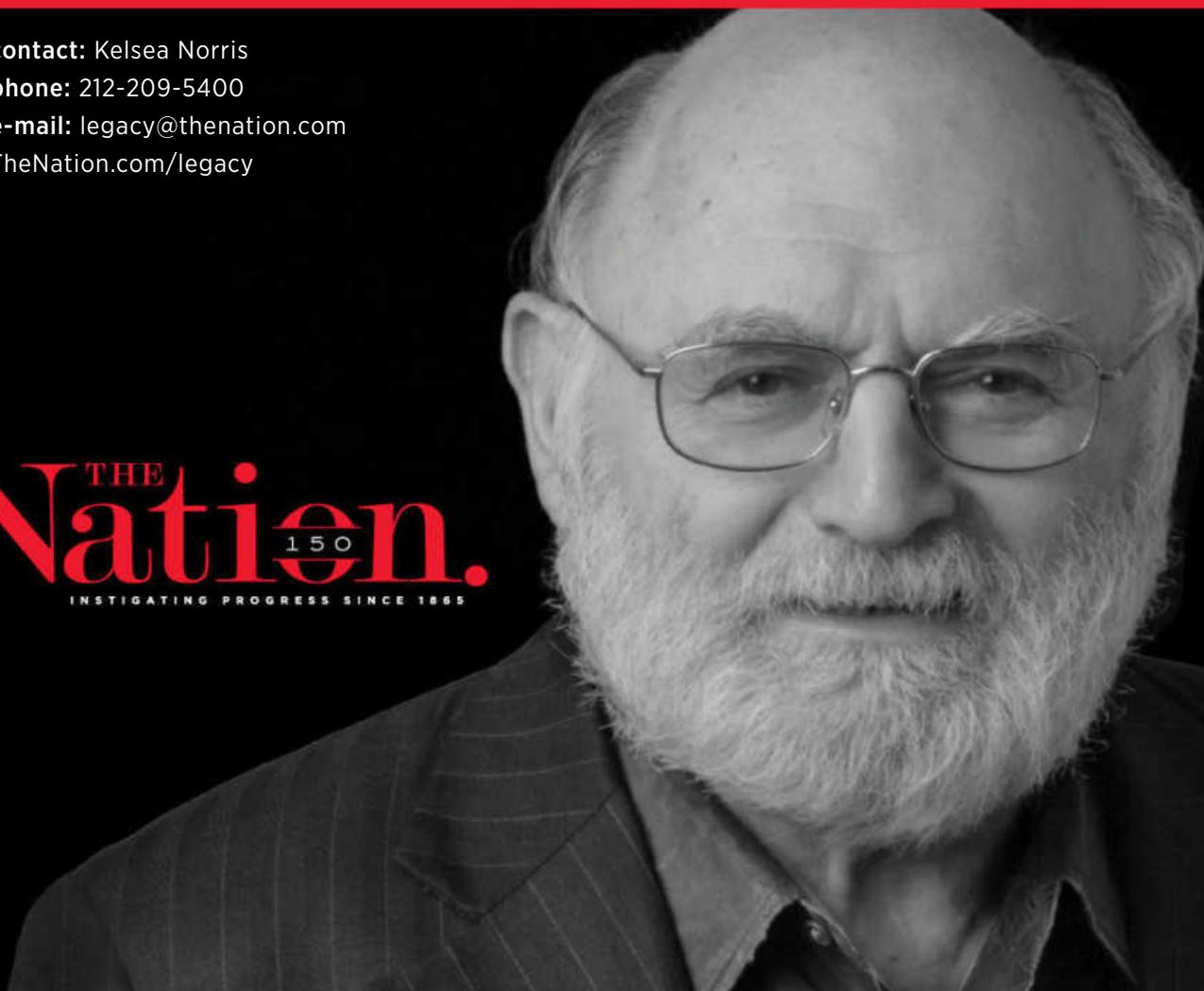
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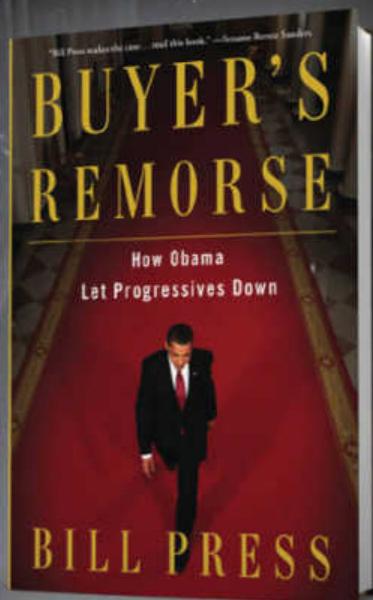
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many of his readers were young. Despite the press embargo, word of his new memoir spread. An initial print run of 80,000 copies sold out almost immediately. Before long, street sellers were hawking pirated copies. *The Cowshed* has never been out of print, and has in fact acquired something of a cult status. A facsimile edition of Ji's handwritten manuscript was recently published. Ji lived to be 98, and in the final years of his life his reputation as a public intellectual continued to grow. Even former premier Wen Jiabao let it be known that he considered Ji a mentor.

Because Ji was a party member, and an elite one at that, his criticism of the Maoist persecution of intellectuals carried a certain weight for mainland Chinese readers: He couldn't be dismissed as a crackpot dissident or embittered failure. In one telling anecdote, Ji describes receiving years' worth of back pay in an envelope stuffed with cash, long after having been released from the cowshed. As a faithful party member, he resolved to donate it to the national coffers. But then he received the news that he would not be fully redeemed right away, as he had expected, but placed on probation for two years. "I was livid," Ji writes. "I had practically paid for my opposition to Nie Yuanzi with my life." He then simply notes without comment that he kept the money he'd been planning to give away.

But while he criticizes Mao for instigating the Cultural Revolution, Ji never goes so far as to altogether reject Mao's leadership. Even at his most sardonic, Ji doesn't directly contradict Deng's famous assessment of Mao as "seven parts good, three parts bad," or attribute the human cost of the Cultural Revolution to Mao's blunders. There is no record that specific passages of Ji's original manuscript were ever censored, and he may well have remained a loyal supporter of Mao. But with decades of experience writing in post-1949 China, Ji would also have known exactly what not to say if he wanted his story to reach a broad Chinese audience.

Ji reserves his sharpest criticism for the party's present attitude toward history. He argues that collective memory of the Cultural Revolution has been artificially and hastily blotted out. He even implies that the integrity of Chinese society is endangered by Beijing's refusal to redress past wrongs, tracing back to the event what he calls the "ethical decline of Chinese society" and the pervasiveness of petty corruption. He Guanghu, an outspoken professor of philosophy at Beijing's top-ranked Renmin University, agrees with Ji's diagnosis: "Keeping quiet about something that's clearly

evil, because speaking up will only irritate your superiors and cause trouble for yourself—that's something people learned to do during the Cultural Revolution," he told me. "Flattering one's superiors, finding fault with unconventional opinions by calling them counterrevolutionary—that's the legacy of the Cultural Revolution too." Like Ji, He argues that failing to openly discuss this legacy makes it harder to root out its ill effects.

Using patriotic language familiar to his readers, Ji urges them to take history seriously. "Today we stress the importance of social harmony, without which the economy cannot grow, and politics cannot fulfill its intended function," he writes. "But while many intellectuals, and older intellectuals in particular, are still filled with resentment, the true unity and harmony we need has not been achieved." Ji's choice of words anticipated the "Harmonious Society" slogan that Hu Jintao's administration introduced in the 2000s. Yet even the policy of "maintaining stability" (*weiwen*) by suppressing protests and the official emphasis on the importance of harmony (*hexie*) suggest the presence of disharmony. The notion that stability needs to be constantly maintained implies the presence of instability beneath a veneer of calm.

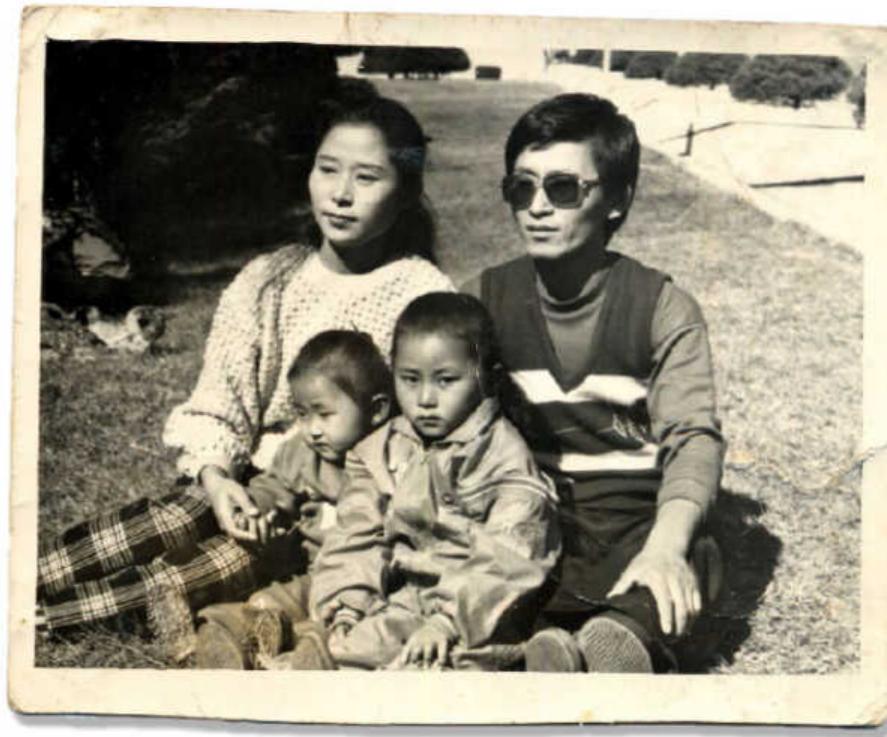
Ji argues powerfully that failing to face historical fact undermines the fabric of society. His critique speaks to what remains a burning issue for the nation: the crisis of faith that pervades many aspects of daily life. Chinese people have told Pew researchers that food safety, air pollution, and corruption are their biggest concerns. In a way, these worries all boil down to a lack of trust in public institutions. You are more likely to believe stories of cooking oil being collected from city sewers, rat meat being sold as mutton, and soy sauce being made from human hair when you can't trust any government agency, much less a private corporation, to give you a straight answer. Modern China seems to bear out Ji's warning that cover-ups can erode societal trust to a dangerous degree.

The willful amnesia that Ji censured still dominates today. There is a certain irony in the fact that China routinely criticizes Japan's revisionist attitude toward its wartime atrocities, given that Chinese history lessons are no more illuminating on the subject of the Mao era's famine and purges than Japanese ones are on comfort women. In fact, the censors may be getting stricter: "Ji Xianlin was able to publish his memoir in 1998, but there's no way he could have published it in 2015," says Dai Jianzhong, a research fellow at the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences. As long as the party's legitimacy is bound up with

Mao's flawed legacy, official accounts will continue to gloss over embarrassing events in post-1949 history. "Peking rules an incredibly vast mass of people by means of an enormous and far-flung bureaucracy," the historian John Fairbank wrote, seeking to explain the Chinese regime's need for prestige. "The rulers must seek by all means to bolster their public image, show themselves successful, and make good their claims to wisdom and influence."

Fairbank wrote these words in 1966—on the eve of the Cultural Revolution—but they read as though he could have written them today. In 1998, the year *The Cowshed* was published, a retired cadre named Peng Qi'an discovered a cemetery outside his native Shantou, in the southern province of Guangdong, where 70 victims of Mao's violence are buried. He has spent years fund-raising to turn the site into a museum commemorating

the victims, which is quite possibly the only one of its kind in China, tucked away outside a third-tier city thousands of miles from the capital. But even Peng's modest memorial site has encountered official opposition from Xi Jinping's regime, which aims to centralize power and smother dissent. Last year, due to pressure from the government, the museum's annual ceremony in memory of victims was quietly canceled for the first time. ■



Yeonmi Park (second from left) and her family in 1996.

Staying Alive

by E. TAMMY KIM

In October 2014, One Young World, a human-rights organization of youth ambassadors, held an international meeting in Dublin. Among the speakers was Yeonmi Park, a waifish 21-year-old wearing a peculiarly fusty pink *bamboek*, or traditional Korean dress, and matching hair ornament. In practiced English she told the audience of her family's suffering and escape from North Korea. A video of the appearance details her family's saga: the hasty decision to cross the border into China; her father's imprisonment in a North Korean gulag and his death from untreated cancer; the rape and slavery that she

In Order to Live

A North Korean Girl's Journey to Freedom.

By Yeonmi Park.

With Maryanne Vollers.

Penguin Press. 273 pp. \$27.95.

and her mother endured as undocumented migrants; and finally their eventual trek to seek refugee status, first in Mongolia and then in South Korea, which grants citizenship to defectors from the North.

To the audience of human-rights advocates, Park was an inspiring new face: a diminutive girl standing up to the most repressive regime on earth. But to many South Koreans, she and her story were already very familiar. Between 2012 and 2014, Park, ap-

pearing under her pseudonym Yeju Park, was a regular on *Now on My Way to Meet You* (known in South Korea as *Ee-mahn-gahp*), a kitschy variety show featuring beautiful female defectors from North Korea. Like others on the program—a blend of *The View* and *The Price Is Right*—she wore heavy makeup, teased hair, minidresses, and stilettos, and gave alternately jokey and mournful accounts of the life she escaped in the DPRK. She had earned the nickname "Paris Hilton," a reference to the relative comfort (sartorial and otherwise) that she, her mother, and her sister had enjoyed back home.

There was nothing of this canny, glamorous Yeju Park on the One Young World stage in Dublin. This was her coming-out party as a very different kind of North Korean defector: surviving victim, witness, and cosmopolitan activist. Her transformation takes another turn in her memoir, *In Order to Live*, which has been as carefully staged as her appearance in Ireland. The book, which takes its title from Joan Didion's famous line about how "we tell ourselves stories in order to live," is co-authored by Maryanne Vollers, the ghostwriter of Hillary Clinton's bestselling *Living History*. In October 2015, Park was on an extensive international book tour, sharing her account of life in "an unimaginable country." Her memoir, one of a handful of North Korean defector narratives published in English last year, is intriguing, not as much for its literary value as for the questions it raises—about the veracity of these stories and their appeal to readers in Asia and Europe. Park's book is already slated for translation into Korean, Japanese, Chinese, Thai, Italian, Danish, Polish, French, Slovenian, Czech, German, Romanian, Hungarian, Portuguese, and Swedish.

Previous tales of North Korean survival have proven unreliable, yet the genre commands a unique authority in the United States. George W. Bush, who as president signed the North Korean Human Rights Act in 2004, was reportedly moved to action by defector narratives; he even invited Kang Chol-hwan,

the author (with Pierre Rigoulot) of the memoir *The Aquariums of Pyongyang*, to the White House in 2005. As demonstrated so clearly last year by the Sony hack and the controversy over *The Interview*, the slapstick movie about Kim Jong-un, North Korea continues to be a favorite punch line and punching bag. It's not uncommon to find Americans completely obsessed with the DPRK who know nothing of South Korea or the Cold War bargain that split the peninsula in two.

Park was born in 1993, in Hyesan, a city just across the Chinese border, about 350 miles northeast of Pyongyang. When she and her older sister Eunmi were very young, their father worked as a respected party member and civil servant, while their mother tended to the home. The family enjoyed a relatively high status, but with the agricultural crisis and famine coinciding with the end of Soviet supports, Park's family, like so many others, turned to black-market capitalism to survive. Her father smuggled precious metals, a risky but remunerative venture that earned him enough to keep his family fed, support a mistress in Pyongyang, and grease the hands of officials and would-be informants. He got away with it until 2002, when he was arrested and imprisoned.

It was at this point, Park writes, that she and her sister experienced the kinds of deprivation that outsiders associate with North Korea: extreme hunger and cold; untreated illness; desperate acts like saving one's feces for fuel. The two girls stopped going to school and focused on staying alive. Their mother, meanwhile, was on the road, "buying and selling watches, clothes and used televisions." When Park was 11, she and her sister got into their own underground business, selling persimmons. "My small market transactions made me realize that I had some control over my own fate. It gave me another tiny taste of freedom." Another "life-changing" taste had come a few years earlier, she says, while watching a smuggled VHS tape of *Titanic*.

In 2005, Park's father conned a prison official into granting him medical leave and returned to his family wraithlike and hobbled by a chronic disease. Park's mother was then in hiding from the authorities for her own business activities and would later turn herself in for a month of hard labor. Around the same time, Park, not yet an adolescent, nearly died from a botched surgery, an event that pushed Eunmi, then 16, over the edge. While visiting Yeonmi at the hospital, Eunmi explained that "she had found a broker to take her to China," and within a few days she disappeared. Park

and her mother went to see the same woman and spontaneously decided to cross themselves, leaving Park's ailing father behind. Park writes that "right then and there I made up my mind. I was going to China, and my mother was coming with me."

Beijing has a strict policy of repatriating North Koreans, regardless of whether they claim to be refugees. Defectors like Park and her mother have to live underground and are thus easy to exploit for sexual and financial gain. As Park tells it, she and her mother were innocents without any idea of the harms ahead. They were told to pretend they were unrelated, and for Park to say that she was 18. The first broker they encountered raped Park's mother, and the women were both sold into servitude. No one had news of Eunmi.

To stay in touch with her mother and protect herself from a worse fate, Park, then 13, became the live-in "mistress" and business assistant of a different trafficker known as Hongwei. Her description of their interactions is by turns fascinating and grotesque, a textbook example of Stockholm syndrome. Hongwei raped Park but promised in simple Chinese: "You be my wife.... Mama come. Papa come. Sister come."

By 2007, Hongwei had made good on his vow: Park and her mother were living with him when Park's father, further devastated by undiagnosed colon cancer, arrived from Hyesan. When he died in 2009, Hongwei arranged for his cremation and burial. Park herself placed the box of ashes in the ground, "toward the flowing river, so that my father could see it while he waited for me to return." Over the next year, despite crackdowns on trafficking and his resulting loss of business, Hongwei would rescue Park from a kidnapper, reunite her with her mother, who had gone to work as a domestic laborer, and assist them in relocating to Shenyang. "He was not all bad. And he had been a miracle for me, really," Park explains.

In Shenyang, she and her mother worked for an online video-chat business servicing lonely South Korean men. The labor was more emotional than sexual, Park writes, and gave them a measure of financial independence. All the while, they contrived an escape from China and learned about a missionary network that would help them do so. Mother and daughter journeyed with a few other North Koreans to Mongolia, a way station to Seoul. The trip by train, bus, taxi, and on foot across the Gobi Desert, Park writes, took four days in life-threatening cold. When the group arrived in Mongolia, nearly thwarted by police, they were treated more like criminals than refugees, subjected to strip searches and

other indignities in a processing center. But they were eventually met by a South Korean representative and flown to Seoul.

Their assimilation into the South began at the Hanawon Resettlement Center near the South Korean capital. There, with about 600 other defectors, Park and her mother were trained in the "Seoul accent," taught Korean history and anticommunist principles, and introduced to banking and the Internet. Once released from this resettlement purgatory, they were given a stipend to offset living expenses but struggled to adjust to life in South Korea. Park, still a teenager but long since out of school, became an obsessive autodidact and soon a minor television star.

In 2013, she and her mother received notice that Eunmi had arrived at Hanawon from China. Park was in the United States at the time, having traveled abroad with an American evangelical missionary group. Her TV work had by then become a part-time job, one that she parlayed into more serious speaking engagements as a commentator and witness to human-rights violations. She was invited to audit a class at Barnard last year and, this past September, gave brief testimony before the United Nations Human Rights Council. The speech was familiar, a cobbled-together excerpt from her book.

Park is a natural performer, her narrative deeply affecting. And to her credit, it's one she recites with a sense of context. She devotes a few pages of *In Order to Live* to Korean history, from ancient times through the Japanese colonization and the devastation of two mid-century wars. Both the United States and the Soviet Union, she writes, are to blame for the "puppet leaders" they installed and the "senseless war" that killed some 3 million Koreans. These facts are worth repeating, and not only because they're obscure to most Americans. The conservative South Korean President Park Geun-hye, the daughter of military dictator Park Chung-hee, is pushing for state-sanctioned textbooks that would weave a fantasia of modern Korea. When it comes to her own narrative, Yeonmi Park has also engaged in some revision. Anyone who's followed her public trajectory and taken note of her statements in Korean and English over the years is nagged by doubts: How much of her story is true? And who is she really?

About a year before *In Order to Live* was published, journalist Mary Ann Jolley, who made a documentary about Park for the Australian news program *Dateline*, pointed out damning inconsistencies in her tale of captivity and highlighted Park's connec-

tions to Liberty in North Korea and other “libertarian” nonprofits. As Jolley wrote in *The Diplomat*, an online magazine about the Asia-Pacific region, from one interview to the next, in articles and TV appearances, the plot of Park’s life would be modified or changed altogether. For instance, on *Now on My Way to Meet You*, Park and her mother spoke of acquiring smuggled haute couture from Japan and being shielded from the worst privations of the mid-1990s famine; in more sober settings with an activist agenda, Park stressed her family’s desperate poverty. As a child, did she really see a woman publicly executed for watching a Hollywood movie? Was her father imprisoned for 17 years, or was it a decade? Did she and her mother cross into China by themselves or with her father in tow? Did she single-handedly inter her father, and were his remains cremated or not?

Park responded to Jolley’s criticisms in *The Diplomat* by citing frequent “miscommunication because of a language barrier” and promising that she would “tell my full story” in her memoir. The book now stands as that definitive account, despite failing to address most of the questions raised by Jolley. Park does attempt to explain her mother’s fancy accessories: “I did not mention that those handbags were secondhand knockoffs from China. Or that our affluent lifestyle did not last for long.” But at the end of the book, she locates other discrepancies in the whirlwind of interviews that followed her speech in Ireland: “I never used a translator, never thought that the journalists might not understand.... I also believed that by changing a few details about my family’s escape to China, I could continue to hide the fact that I had been trafficked”—despite the fact that she’d discussed her trafficking on that Dublin stage. “I was reacting, improvising like a jazz musician playing the same melody a little differently each time, unaware that there might be people out there keeping score.” (Park, through a representative at Penguin, declined to be interviewed or respond to questions for this article.)

Among these scorekeepers, Park writes, was Kim Jong-un. She recalls how, in early 2015, the DPRK released two YouTube videos attacking her as a Western propagandist. “They had sifted through my interviews and attacked me for supposed inconsistencies in my quotes,” she writes. “Worst of all, they paraded my relatives and former friends to denounce me and my family.” Defector accounts are uniquely difficult to judge, immune to fact-checking due to the closed nature of the DPRK. Yet the North’s web-

enabled assault bolstered Park’s reputation and shielded her from scrutiny. The geopolitics of North Korea permit no nuance: To be an enemy of Kim Jong-un is to be a hero(ine) in the rest of the world.

At the beginning of 2015, prominent refugee Shin Dong-hyuk was accused of telling lies in his best-selling 2012 memoir, *Escape From Camp 14: One Man’s Remarkable Odyssey From North Korea to Freedom in the West*, written by American journalist Blaine Harden. Under pressure from fellow defectors in South Korea who’d questioned his account, Shin admitted misrepresenting when and where he’d been imprisoned and at what age he’d suffered particular acts of torture. Leftist Koreans and Korean Americans, who have criticized the human-rights framework for undermining reunification efforts—and, in the words of the Korea Policy Institute’s Christine Hong, providing “extensive space to defector testimony without weighing the perils of an over-reliance on this sort of informational base”—weren’t surprised. Shin, like countless other refugees, ascribed the inaccuracies in his memoir to the effects of trauma. But how to selectively claw back a story that had already been published, translated into two dozen languages, and made the centerpiece of a United Nations human-rights inquiry?

South Korea, a nation of 50 million people, has to date resettled some 27,000 *talbukja* (meaning “one who left the North”). The popularity of *Now on My Way to Meet You* reveals a hunger for first-person accounts from the DPRK, even as employers and landlords—indoctrinated in the South’s anticommunist gospel—discriminate against the Northerners in their midst. As Park once explained on a news-magazine broadcast: “I came to South Korea with a feeling of deep kinship, but people here perceive me only as a *talbukja*, someone of a different nationality.... ‘You’re not a spy, right?’... So then, to which country do I belong?”

Park has journeyed from North Korea to China, Mongolia, and Seoul. Now, as an international activist and author, she has managed a third escape—from the confines and emotional statelessness of life in South Korea. On her Facebook page, she posts inspirational quotes and globe-trotting selfies; posed snapshots, too, with British model Cara Delevingne and the parents of Malala Yousafzai. She claims to be building awareness and advancing the goal of peaceful regime change by dint of her public persona.

In the early chapters of her book, she describes her father’s innate entrepreneurial skill: “I think my father would have become a millionaire if he had grown up in South



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Korea or the United States.... Almost anywhere else, business would have been my father's vocation. But in North Korea, it was simply a means to survive." Just as her parents plied their wares in the black markets

of Pyongyang and Hyesan, Park has become a vendor in the marketplace of celebrity culture and international human rights. It's a trade she's intent on mastering—on television and the world stage. ■

Nasty Speech

by JOAN WALLACH SCOTT

Whether or not you're a parent with kids in school, you've probably heard stories like these. A public-school student refuses to salute the flag on the grounds that her religion forbids it. A 15-year-old wears an armband to class to protest war. Another makes a sexually suggestive speech to support a friend's student-government election campaign. At a school-sponsored off-campus event, a boy wears a T-shirt that seems to support drug use; student editors prepare to run stories in the school newspaper about the potentially controversial topics of teenage pregnancy and divorce; a girl mutters an insult under her breath that is overheard by a teacher who takes offense; friends text mean words about a classmate; a teenager posts angry thoughts about a teacher on Facebook. When school officials punish these different kinds of expression, what recourse do the students have? And what about their parents—where is the line between parental authority and a school's jurisdiction? Does the speech of students—young, immature, impressionable, dependent—warrant the same First Amendment protections granted to adults?

Catherine Ross's answer is a resounding yes. Ross, a professor at the George Washington University Law School, makes a compelling case in *Lessons in Censorship* for the importance of acceding students free speech not only as a constitutional right, but also as a vital democratic practice. "Schools have a unique opportunity and obligation to demonstrate the importance of fundamental constitutional values as an integral part of preparing students to participate in a robust, pluralist democracy," she writes. "And the best way of transmitting values," she stresses, is by "showing how the principles that govern us work in action." She readily admits that striking the right balance between discipline and freedom is difficult. The waters of "free speech rights

Lessons in Censorship

How Schools and the Courts Subvert Students' First Amendment Rights.

By Catherine J. Ross.
Harvard. 356 pp. \$39.95.

in public schools" are "unsettled" and "rife with rocky shoals and uncertain currents," she notes, citing the opinion of the Second Circuit panel (which included Sonia Sotomayor) in *Guiles v. Marineau*, a 2006 case about a school banning a student's T-shirt that criticized President George W. Bush as "a chicken-hawk president and...a former alcohol and cocaine abuser." Despite the fragility and uneven application of constitutional principles, Ross thinks they make it possible to distinguish between genuinely insubordinate behavior and the expression of critical opinions, between unacceptable bullying and tolerable (albeit stinging) insults. The trouble, from her point of view, is that recent court rulings have muddied the waters that were once clear.

The high-water mark for clarity came in 1968 with the Supreme Court ruling in *Tinker vs. Des Moines Independent Community School District*. John Tinker was a 15-year-old public-school student who, along with his sister and a friend, planned to wear black armbands to school to protest the Vietnam War. When school officials learned of the planned protest, they forbade the wearing of armbands and threatened to suspend anyone who didn't comply. Tinker was willing to meet with the board to explain the reasons for his action. The board rejected his offer; he defied the prohibition and was duly suspended. The case he brought against the disciplinary action eventually reached the Supreme Court, which ruled in Tinker's favor. In a 7-to-2 decision, the majority noted that students "are 'persons' under our Constitution.... In the absence of a specific showing of constitutionally valid reasons to regulate their speech, students are entitled to freedom of expression of their views." The Court placed two limits on such expression. First, it must not "materially and substantially" interfere with school discipline; second, it "must not collide with the rights of other students to be secure and let alone." *Tinker*, Ross explains, "provided a special framework for evaluating when schools violate students' affirmative right to speak that balances the constitutional rights of individuals with society's need for schools that can

fulfill the many demands we place on them."

This "expansive" notion of students' rights came from the Warren Court—the decision itself was written by Justice Abe Fortas—at the end of its long history of liberal interpretations of the Constitution. Ross points out that Fortas was an important proponent of the view that age "should not be used to deprive minors of the constitutional rights that protect adults." Still, he "balanced children's rights with competing societal goals by proposing specially tuned measures of constitutionality for institutions that serve the young." For Ross, *Tinker* remains the best legal precedent for defining and reigning in illegitimate school attempts to censor student speech.

As more conservative justices were appointed to the Supreme Court, *Tinker* was modified and school authorities given greater leeway to impose limits on student speech. In 1986, in *Bethel School District v. Fraser*, "lewd speech" was considered punishable in the educational interest of preserving "the shared values of a civilized social order." Speech thought to be sexually suggestive, regardless of whether or not it posed "material and substantial" threats to school discipline, could now be censored by teachers and administrators. In 1988, the Court introduced, in *Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier*, the idea that censorship could be imposed on any speech that might be construed as being "school-sponsored." Articles published in a school newspaper, and even the classroom expression of controversial ideas, could be ruled out of order (and those who wrote or uttered them punished) if they were seen in any way to compromise the school's reputation. In 2007, *Morse v. Frederick* added off-campus events to the list of so-called school-sponsored activities, and speech that was construed as being related (however indirectly) to illegal-drug use was denied constitutional protection as well.

Ross cites in rich detail a number of instances in which arbitrary judgments by school officials were justified in terms of these new precepts. In one case, a principal canceled a student drama workshop based on the experiences of Iraq War veterans because he didn't want his school associated with its antiwar "point of view." In another case, a teacher, fearing the school would be seen to endorse religion, removed from a Thanksgiving display a kindergartner's poster in which she expressed thanks to Jesus. Ross's trenchant analysis and sometimes chilling examples show teachers and principals cowed by the protests of parents or politicians who are anxious about security, eager to assert their authority in the face of

Joan Wallach Scott is professor emerita at the Institute for Advanced Study's School of Social Science, and an adjunct professor of history at the Graduate Center, CUNY.

outspoken—sometimes brash—student resistance, and jealous of their ability to impose rules and maintain order. School censorship can be arbitrary, inconsistent, and irrational, turning students' expressions of opinion, their adolescent silliness, satire, or surliness, into serious—and punishable—infractions of what was defined as a school's social order.

For Ross, the alternative to censorship and punishment for speech that may cross some line between acceptability and outrageousness is to turn the use of such speech itself into "teachable moments." She argues strongly that hate speech (racist, sexist, homophobic, or religious bullying) is also protected by the First Amendment. In most cases, she maintains, censorship of it is a violation of the speaker's rights, however hurtful the words may be. The solution to hate speech lies elsewhere: Outside of school, in the world "children will grow up to live in, they will likely have to learn how to respond to speech they find objectionable and even unbearable without sinking to the offensive speaker's level or slugging him. It may be best to learn to respond, whether by walking away or questioning, as a student under the watchful guidance of teachers rather than as an adult at a bar. Under the Speech Clause, the best remedy for nasty speech is more and better-quality speech that offers alternative visions and models civil responses."

But can schools and their teachers be counted on to provide this kind of response? Will parents whose children are the targets of cruel insults be satisfied with this approach? And what counts as a civil response? At a time when "civility" has become a code word for censoring political speech in universities and colleges, with some of us having warned that its invocation poses a threat to academic freedom ["The New Thought Police," May 4, 2015], I was struck by Ross's emphasis on civility as a solution to the problems posed by hate speech. In contrast to public elementary and secondary schools, where First Amendment rights are invoked to protect underage students from the arbitrary authority of those who have a legitimate rule over them, on college campuses it's the faculty who increasingly need protection from the demands of students and, even more, the whims of administrators who, seeking to guarantee the comfort of their paying clients (students and their parents), impose all manner of unconstitutional regulations on teachers in the name of civility.

Ross does recognize that civility is not a self-evident concept, that it can be used to justify punishment in the name of a social or political status quo, and that it often conflates

someone's manner of speaking with the substance of the utterance. She argues—rightly, I think—that we need to distinguish between, on the one hand, the teaching of civility "through modeling civil language and behavior, lectures, lessons, and exhortation" and, on the other, "bringing the state's coercive power to bear in punishing a manner of speech authorities conclude transgresses 'shared values' as school officials define them after the fact." She is also fully sensitive to the need to forgive certain kinds of defiance and acting out typical of adolescence, such as using the word "fuck" in a written assignment.

Ross is adamant that students have the constitutional right to express their beliefs (within the limits of the *Tinker* standards) and that they cannot be prevented (by censorship or punishment) from uttering them. I share her defense of student free speech and her frustration at the often extreme violations of it that school officials routinely commit. Still, I wonder if "civility," with its connotations of deference as well as politeness, its emphasis on conformity rather than independence, and its implication that we must tolerate those we disdain, is what we want to exhort school children to practice. Does freedom of expression depend on the absence of criticism? Will a student's family and community take criticism of her ideas to be unacceptable "censorship"? To take a specific example, when the power of some religious groups resonates more acceptably with school officials than that of LGBT dissenters, what recourse, outside of the judicial realm, do the dissenters have? Can we depend on educators to protect what Ross refers to aptly as the fragile pluralism of our democracy?

If, instead of civility, the foundational values of democracy—equality, fairness, and respect for differences—were to be inculcated, teachers as well as students could address the sort of structural issues that are neglected when individual speech is identified as the source of a disagreement. Racist language, for instance, is anchored in assumptions

shared by communities of people; it assumes the implicit support of these communities. The reply to "nasty speech" needs to expose this larger context in all its dimensions. A democratic pedagogy must go beyond a consideration of students' individual rights. It requires an awareness not only of the expressive power of ideas, but of the larger historical, social, and political contexts within which ideas are formed and take effect. This critical pedagogy is not neutral in its outlook; nor is it totalitarian. Its ethos is not that anything goes, but that ideas have consequences that need to be subjected to critical interrogation—not in the interests of conformity or normative regulation, but in order to guarantee the very future of democracy. ■

"Circling Birdies"

In cartoon worlds, if you're struck on the head the small birds that encircle your scalp are known as a "halo" or "circling birdies"—a cartoonist's *motif* or *trope* or *idiom*.

Trope is misused in the context and idiom bent to fit the warped view the sufferer is perceiving. At the top of the block late this afternoon, four or five yellow-

rumped thornbills, electric between lucerne and eucalypts, suddenly flocked about my head and began circling, or encircling—making me dizzy with long shadows pulling my feet

out from beneath me, their shattering tiny glass voices enticing yet repellent. I thought of Hartnett's "Necklace of Wrens" which I could only partially recollect and even

now can't quite configure, while realising it had something to do with the order of words, and that I would have to draw on all composition to gently break free of their wreath.

JOHN KINSELLA



© MAX FREEMAN

Garth Greenwell.

An Impossible Promise

by DAMON GALGUT

The word “shame” occurs frequently in *What Belongs to You*, Garth Greenwell’s exquisite first novel, and it is always related to desire. His narrator is gay, which causes him shame as a child; later he’s ashamed of the places—public toilets and other cruising grounds—where he goes to look for sex. It’s in one of

What Belongs to You

By Garth Greenwell.

Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 194 pp. \$23.

these places, the bathrooms of Bulgaria’s National Palace of Culture in Sofia, where he meets a young hustler named Mitko, and it’s the peculiar, lopsided relationship between them, suffused with desire and shame, that is the subject of the book.

As might be expected, Mitko is rough,

from a poor background. He’s in his early 20s, has a broken front tooth, is nearly always drunk, smokes weed, and gets into fights. He also makes a living from selling his body to a succession of shadowy men he mostly liaises with online. No big surprises there, yet he remains to some extent unknowable. “Never before,” says the narrator, “had I met anyone who combined such transparency (or the semblance of transparency) with such mystery, so that he seemed at once overexposed and hidden behind impervious defenses.”

The same could be said of Greenwell’s American narrator, whose name we never know. He seems to be absolutely forthcoming, yet there’s a great deal he doesn’t tell us. Who is he? What’s he doing in Bulgaria? We know that he’s a teacher at the prestigious American College there (as Greenwell was too for a while), but why? The reasons he provides are both informative and opaque. “I think I hoped I would feel new in a new country, but I wasn’t new here, and if there was comfort in the idea that my habitual unease had a cause...it was a false comfort, a way of running away from real remedy.”

At first the two men see each other regularly, but things predictably turn bad. There is the possibility of violence and blackmail, and a later unpleasant episode involving syphilis, despite all of which Mitko would like our narrator to believe that he is not just a client, but a *priyatel*, a friend. The word is inaccurate—friendship implies something fuller—but it’s clear that the usual barriers have broken down. Mitko keeps coming round, not just for sex or money, but sometimes out of a need to talk, to be seen and heard by somebody who likes him. There is mutual exploitation, but also emotion; each of them wants something more from the other, something harder, maybe impossible, to define.

A kind of answer lies in the second part of the book, aptly titled “A Grave,” when our narrator receives a message that his father is dying. The two of them have been estranged for a long time, and this news stirs both memory and conflict in him. Long ago in the past, there was a sense of wholeness, the Edenic innocence of childhood, from which he has been expelled by the original sin of his sexuality. In his father’s eyes, he is a “faggot,” a judgment from which his shame can’t be separated. The scene of rejection is cruel (and painful to read), all the more so because of the narrator’s palpable yearning for the love that has been taken away. This has been foreshadowed in an earlier moment when he watches a young girl being held by her father while she leans over a river, and he

Damon Galgut is a fiction writer. His most recent novel is *Arctic Summer* (Europa).

reflects on how the meaning of that simple embrace will change as she grows older. He thinks: "So it is that at the very moment we come into full consciousness of ourselves what we experience is leave-taking and a loss we seek the rest of our lives to restore."

The connection is implied, not explained, but we suddenly understand a great deal about why the narrator is so drawn to Mitko. To be loved, to be held, to be cared for, *without condition*: It's the deepest human craving, one that promises to annul all the abrasions and imperfections of our lives. An impossible promise, of course, but no less powerful for that. He doesn't want to let Mitko down, in the way his own father did to him. In another telling scene, he watches a fly in the window of a tram and becomes anguished at the idea that a passenger might crush the little insect. He reflects: "It was ridiculous to care so much, I knew, it was just a fly, why should it matter; but it did matter, at least while I watched it. That's all care is, I thought, it's just looking at a thing long enough, why should it be a question of scale?"

The narrator cares for Mitko, and his tenderness shines through the transactional nature of their relationship. He wants in some way to save him, to change his destiny, but of course he can't. They are separated from each other by age, nationality, language, and class—divisions that can at some times seem minor, and at others as inescapable as fate. Structurally, the book is divided into three parts. In the first, the two men are groping toward each other, searching for connection. The middle section, dealing with the narrator's father and his early years, is a pivotal moment, after which, in part three, he begins to move away from Mitko, to let him go. By now he has a lover and is trying to change his own future, yet through all of this he continues to feel for the young man. The process is sad, because it's both inevitable and gentle. By the end, when their parting is final, the rupture has the weight of a much fuller relationship reaching its terminus, though in fact their connection had been slight and intermittent, and most of its gravity comes from yearning rather than real experience.

This goes, like the story, to the heart of desire. There is something ephemeral and ungraspable about wanting another human being, because the hunger can never be fulfilled. Love, if that's the term that applies here, is like a question without an answer. That's as true of Heathcliff or Lolita as it is of Mitko, and Garth Greenwell knows

this very well. Although he uses words with precision and care, taking pains to describe small details, they can never pin down the longing that burns at the center of the story; instead, they outline its shape by filling in everything around it.

Stylistically, Greenwell owes more to Sebald than to Nabokov; his long, meditative sentences, which often veer aside into a seemingly unrelated observations, are powered by reflection rather than feeling. One of the great pleasures of his prose is how profoundly thoughtful it is, even when considering physical needs and passions. This is emotion recollected in tranquillity, or rather in melancholy. There is an almost visceral disjunction between places and actions that are grubby, even squalid, and the delicacy of the lens through which they're seen. Yet the effect, paradoxically, is one of almost pure emotion, though I wouldn't care to put a name to it.

There will be speculation about whether Greenwell is writing directly from his own experience. He and his narrator seem to share a common biography, but that could be a game. Less playful is the note of candor and sincerity, which is hard to fake. "I've never been good at concealing anything," the narrator says, "the whole bent of my nature is toward confession." Well, yes—but also no. He certainly doesn't shy away from describing all kinds of bodily functions and failings, only some of them sexual. Nor is he afraid of looking at emotional distress, his own included. But at the same time there is a very definite edge to the map, past which the narrator won't tell us anything, not even his name. What's odd is that he's forthcoming about what most people would instinctively conceal and reticent about obvious information that can usually be taken for granted. This duality is beautifully judged; we're being told the truth, but not the whole truth, just that part of it worth knowing.

Without all the normal markers, the narrator becomes not a character in the usual sense, but a voice. It's this pensive voice—free-floating, refined, and with its lack of anchor or explanation—that is the biggest (though quietest) achievement of the novel. It's a voice of the mind, remembering and contemplating and examining its own compulsions. At the same time, Greenwell is very good at conjuring the physical world, in all its beauty and decay. He's especially deft at little snapshots of urban Bulgaria, often gritty and bleak, but he registers it on an aesthetic level, not historically or politically. The real landscape is internal.

For obvious reasons, a voice like this is

very much alone. The sense of solitude and isolation is overpowering, all the more so when the narrator tries to break free. The constant translation of Bulgarian words that pepper the text only serves to reinforce—sometimes to slightly comic effect—that he's a stranger in a strange land. But of course it's with Mitko that he most wants to connect, and their painful dance becomes emblematic of something much larger. This is a world in which nothing and nobody really fits together, and people are always reaching for each other over small but impossible distances. What belongs to you? The answer: Probably nothing.

If this sounds depressing, the desolation is frequently offset by little sunlit moments where nature, or human nature, shine through. Children and childhood have a special place, like a state of grace before things go awry. But perhaps the biggest consolation is, once again, in language. The world might be ugly, but the words that describe it are beautiful. "Making poems was a way of loving things," the narrator says, "of preserving them, of living moments twice; or more than that, it was a way of living more fully, of bestowing on experience a richer meaning." There is some redemption in that. ■

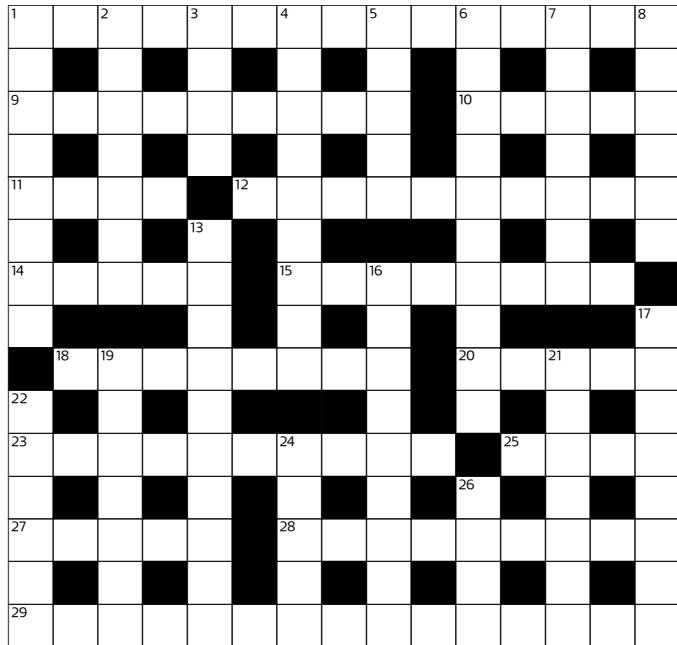
"We let men take wealth which is not theirs; if the seizure is 'legal' we call it high profits and the profiteers help decide what is legal."—W.E.B. Du Bois
The Nation, October 20, 1956



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Puzzle No. 3390

JOSHUA KOSMAN AND HENRI PICCIOTTO



ACROSS

1 Go away after vocalist holds dissonant chord—is it live or not? (12,3)
 9 Wearing jeans, I cut out a book of the Bible (9)
 10 Ass-backwards—or dark red, for the most part... (5)
 11 ...for a tangled hairstyle (4)
 12 Beggar with a mischievous spirit taking over (9)
 14 Freud, deranged, conceals location of mammary glands (5)
 15 Depression-era dryness that is moving south to east (8)
 18 Disk storage in a computer holding Trebek's test (4,4)
 20 In westbound flight, LAX elicits praise (5)
 23 Musical child adopted by extremely merry sprite (2,4,4)
 25 Smell of decaying door (4)
 27 Take up blackmail, ultimately, to make money (5)
 28 I showed up late, in underwear, in a French restaurant (9)
 29 Football team eats in, with some bits served repeatedly (9,6)

DOWN

1 Study outline boosted casino chain at center of industry (8)
 2 He drove recklessly and defied gravity (7)
 3 For example, “gosh” is old hat, somehow (4)
 4 In a blazing celestial object, fire is one of those unavoidable things (6,3)
 5 On either side of a curve, leave artist's paste (5)
 6 Amazonian plant made from pieces of tuber, recombined (6,4)
 7 Molding grain on rocks (7)
 8 Hop randomly in attempt for prize (6)
 13 Genius brain cell I destroyed (10)
 16 “Swift in a frenzy”—*Time* outflanks the press (9)
 17 Streets around van Gogh's onetime residence are nothing like his most famous painting (8)
 19 Official fall chorus (7)
 21 Country and/or God (7)
 22 Charm a stubborn person with a bit of teasing (6)
 24 In Buffalo, best places to find a stud (5)
 26 Its alcohol chiefly goes to one's head! (4)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3389

ACROSS 1 letter bank 8 2 def. 9 “coarse heir” 11 G(LID)E (e.g. rev.) 12 THE MESON + G 13 [b]RAVE (*B-les*) 14 pun 18 PALIN + D + ROME 19 S(K)IP 22 CARPED + I.E. + M 25 PASTA 26 anag. 27 “Occident” 28 KNO(W + NOT HINGIS)M (*monk* rev.)
 DOWN 1 MA + NAGER (rev.) 2 RETR(I)EVAL (*traveler* anag.) 3 AM + USED 4 E(XPAT) 5 SO(CC)ER MOM (*memo* or anag.) 6 NE[s]R + VEGAS 7 ERA + TO 10 hidden 15 D(ERRING)DO (*odd* rev.) 16 PA(KIS)s)TANI (*pinata* anag.) 17 anag. 18 [a]PE + CAN 20 P + HAN + TOM 21 [po/OP]-TION 23 RA MEN 24 MOO + CH

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Kosman & Picciotto explain what they're up to at TheNation.com/article/solving-nations-cryptic-crosswords/.

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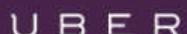
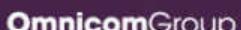
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- The New York Times
January 26, 2013

If the industry is to survive, gun enthusiasts must embrace all youth shooting activities, including ones, "using semiautomatic firearms with magazines holding 30-100 rounds."

-Andy Fink, Editor of Junior Shooters magazine



The Domini Social Equity Fund doesn't invest in gun makers. We never have.

We make all of our investments in pursuit of two fundamental goals: ecological sustainability and universal human dignity. Guns don't make our cut.

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